

The relevance of the Ecumene in beyond border narratives: A Timor-Leste case study from the anthropological library and the field

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Dissertação para obtenção de grau de Mestre
em Antropologia

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Resumo

A pesquisa desenvolve uma abordagem bidimensional em relação ao mundo: através do olhar da antropologia e do olhar das relações internacionais. As relações Além-fronteiras, desempenham um papel relevante no nosso quotidiano, num mundo que se desenvolve rapidamente, motivo pelo qual devemos considerar uma complementaridade entre os contextos sociais quer dos estados quer dos povos para a construção de processos de globalização. A proposta desta pesquisa é que isso ocorre por meio de projeções da ecumene para a construção de regionalismos internacionais. Timor-Leste serve como um estudo de caso relevante para explorar essa avenida de pesquisa através do processo dialógico entre o micro e o macro, considerando um processo contínuo de interação entre vários sistemas de significado no quadro da negociação da organização social além-fronteiras.

Palavras-Chave: Narrativas além-fronteira; Relações entre Estados; Regionalismo internacional; Projeções da Ecumene; Timor-Leste

Abstract

The following work elaborates on a bi-dimensional approach towards the world at large: through the gaze of anthropology and through the gaze of international relations. Beyond border relations do play a relevant role in our everyday more rapidly growing world, for which reason we must consider a complementarity between states and peoples social contexts for the construction of the processes of globalization. The proposal is that this takes places through ecumene projections for the building of international regionalism. Timor-Leste serves as a relevant case study for exploring this avenue through the dialogical process between the micro- and the macro, considering a continuous interaction process between several meaning systems in the domain of negotiating social organizations.

Keywords: Beyond Border Narratives; States Relations; International Regionalism; Ecumene Projections; Timor-Leste

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Glossary and acronym guide:

ACB – Asian Central Bank

APF – Asia Pacific Forum

ASEAN – Association of Southeast Asian Nations

CPLP – Community of Portuguese Language speaking Countries

INGO – International Non-governmental Organization

IR – International Relations

IRO – International Regional Organization

OECD – Organization of Economic Co-operation and Development

TL – Timor-Leste

UN – United Nations

UNAMET – United Nations Mission in East Timor

WTO – World Trade Organization

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Introduction

One of the creation myths of Timor is narrating the beginning of the island as simply a large moon. During time it got separated into several pieces and lost its parts which were floating away. Therefore, the island of Timor is seen as the origin of all inhabited lands which remained with the shape of a crocodile. Following this myth, every human being is connected to each other with its roots in Timor-Leste (see Seixas, 2016: 420).

Following several narratives in Timor-Leste (TL), foreigners who come to the country may always be received as part of the family - someone who is returning back 'home' (Seixas, 2016; Van Engelhoven, 2006 in Seixas, 2008). This serves as a case study for paving the way to understand imaginations of the world at large: face to face encounters, local knowledge, primary institutions (family, amity, basic sociability); what will be referred as 'ecumene projections' throughout this thesis. Addressing this, I propose to discuss a bi-dimensional approach which occurs in texts and discourses on beyond border relations – the world as ecumene and the world as a 'states relation' (Hannerz, 1989; Linklater, 2010). Through the ecumene, our planet (or parts of it) is understood as a socially constructed, intersubjective togetherness. On the opposite, the relations between states as a hegemonic modern approach underestimates the relevance of culture¹ and thus, ecumene projections within its discourses (Reus-Smit, 2019). Following this, the main objective of this dissertation is to unveil the elements of the ecumene in the discourses of such relations between states in order to analyze their meaning. This links with the idea of community vs. the idea of society; or *Gemeinschaft* vs. *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies, 1887). *Gemeinschaft* (or community) is an approach of emotional proximity, shared feelings and a mutual construction of meaning; *Gesellschaft* (or society), on the contrary, is a relation which is defined by formal bureaucratic bounds, economic interests and political order (Tönnies, 1887).

The main target is to explore how such ecumene projections are expressed in such interrelations (and what the use of it might be in the building of international regions).

¹ It must be noted that through an IR perspective, culture is seen (as is the case with the author Reus-Smit) as something from below. In an anthropological point of view, culture is everywhere. It is more a question of which culture we are talking about. There are, of course, several dimensions of culture. Nevertheless, here it is spoken of a culture in terms of the relation between states and on the other hand a culture which takes primary subnational institutions into account.

The intention of this dissertation is to contribute to a beyond border realm understanding as a platform of meanings in order to construct new realities in new times (international regions), and to cope with interrelations in the context of the world at large. From anthropological perspective, this will be addressed through the approach of the ideological system of a social organization from 'below' (Geertz, 1973).

Hence, as the case study of TL reveals, there is a widespread perception of the world as a large family, for which reason this avenue will also be tackled through a 'kinship'/amity imagination approach. Therefore, it has to be questioned if kinship/amity could be understood as a relevant domain for the imagination of a beyond border realm in a dialogic² way to a 'states relation' perspective. In these terms, the proposal is that anthropology may tackle beyond border relations through ecumene projections (Pina-Cabral, 2010). In the context of TL, the idea of the state is a very recent reality, for which reason it can be expected that the polylogue (Kristeva, 1977) between the two outlined imaginations (states relations and the ecumene) comes frequently to the surface in a reciprocal way and play a relevant role for perceiving the world at large.

This dissertation evolved as a part of the EU project 'Competing Regional Integrations in southeast Asia' of which I am a grant-holder. Working closely together on this avenue with my two supervisors and main researchers of this project in Portugal (with a focus on TL and the regional grouping ASEAN), Paulo Castro Seixas and Nuno Canas Mendes, I had the opportunity to discover my curiosity on the construction of international regions as a subject which challenges our discipline. The aim is to understand a gap within approaching the world at large – here proposed to be the case between anthropology and international relations. Imaginations on international regions include the bi-dimensional approach which is the ground for this dissertation; particularly focusing on the lack in literature and the relevance of the ecumene in international relations.

² Dialogy can be seen as a confrontation of logics: we prefer the use of dialogy as a crossroad of logics/rationals. In an epistemological way, we may consider a confrontation of rationals which eventually are in a complementary position to political action. Hence, within this dissertation, we intend to unveil projections which were not yet considered as valid for scientific purposes.

Theoretical Framework

Regarding the theoretical framework of this dissertation, it seems that there is an existing lack of literature regarding culture in international relations (Reus-Smit, 2019). The Ecumene appears as a relevant concept to bridge this gap (Hannerz, 1989; Mintz, 1996; Pina-Cabral, 2010). The boom of anthropological fieldwork and literature on TL in the last 15 years as well as its inside-outside relations as a core topic are a relevant ground to elaborate on the importance of the ecumene in beyond border relations (Fox, 1996; Hohd, 2002; Engelhoven, 2010; Traube, 2011; Bovensiepen, 2015; Seixas, 2016; and so forth). This will be the support for contributing to discuss ecumene projections within international relations.

Anthropology has been tackling this avenue through a genealogy which has several approaches, such as kinship and alliances at large (Levi-Strauss, 1971); *Gemeinschaft* or community (Tönnies, 1887); *Communitas* (Turner, 1991); and others. Therefore, there is a universe of meanings related to which the ecumene stands as one of the latest emergences.

Since these areas of research do not directly link with states relations, there is still a gap in literature on how the ecumene links with international relations. Even though, recently some concepts came to the foreground which discuss the relevance of social contexts (what will be proposed through ecumene projections in course of this theses) within international relations: global civil society (Keane, 2003; Mishra, 2012; Reus-Smit, 2019), soft power (Nye, 2008; Hanes & Andrei, 2015), global *gemeinschaft* (Robertson, 2012); which partly strives on the here proposed research avenue of the ecumene (Hannerz, 1992; Mintz, 1996; Pina-Cabral, 2010).

Following this, it has to be questioned: When we talk about interrelations in terms of the world at large, which are the approaches we have to consider? This has been greatly tackled by international relations and politics in forms of states relations and its macro-structures, in which discussion Anthropology usually does not take place (Eriksen & Neumann, 1993). Presently, within anthropology, it would be rather spoken of the interconnection of all human beings, resulting in one single global community (Eriksen & Neumann, 1993); or, in a global ecumene (Hannerz, 1989).

“Cultural interrelatedness increasingly reaches across the world. More than ever, there is now a global ecumene. To grasp this fact, in its wide range of manifestations and implications, is the largest task now confronting a macro-anthropology of culture.” (Hannerz, 1989: 66)

We propose that this idea may be linked to international relations; which precisely focus (within this context) on the multiplicity of states working together in a particular way – may it be through soft power, through INGOs, or through direct politics. If we take these approaches towards beyond border relations into account, we can see that one does not exclude the other and even more, there’s relevance in an interdisciplinary manner which still hasn’t been approached (Adler, 2017; Beier, 2005; Montison, 2018).

For discussing such a bi-dimensional perspective towards understanding interactions within the global-local realm, the concept *Gemeinschaft*/community & *Gesellschaft*/society (Tönnies, 1887) serves as another idiom for ecumene projections from below and the relation between states. Tönnies provides fundamental reflections through the typologies of two kinds of human wills (the natural and the rational). These two distinctions serve as a basis for different personalities, societies, imaginations and ideologies. Through the term *Gemeinschaft* as an ideal type he tries to classify ‘communities’ with their social ties and imaginations, whereof interactions are based on traditional settings and rules that lead to the structure of a social organization, which he breaks down to emotional expressions whereof moral obligations arise. With *Gesellschaft* he tackles indirect connections between individuals of a society as a whole, which can be performed through several instruments of communication and can be referred to state relations/the relevance of soft power. Characteristic for the term *Gesellschaft* are formal values which function on a macro-level to organize social structures of people of a shared (bigger) territory, following economic and political interests (Tönnies, 1887).

Hence, we propose that the case of TL, when understood through the gaze of *Gemeinschaft*, is acting as a community which may be globally linked through ecumene projections. When understanding TL within the perspective of modernity (State level) and its interconnectedness with regional organizations and INGO’s, for instance, we may talk about the conceptualization of a *Gesellschaft*, considering the relation between states

of great importance (Reus-Smit, 2019). It is relevant to question which the projections are that we have to approach when we talk about beyond border relations.

We propose that when linking this path to classical anthropological discussions, ideas on the households, the exchange of women and alliances between kingdoms, as well as emotional proximity and larger bounds serve well for questioning the ecological and social functions for imagining beyond border constructions, which may have certain anthropological purposes: the legitimization of ontologies; the expansion of alliances as a way to sustain authority; and the discovery of kin beyond borders for exogamy functions in order to stabilize relations (micro- and macrostructures) (Levi-Strauss, 1971; Mauss, 1966; and more).

When leaning on the concept of reciprocity (Mauss, 1966), the exchange of individuals remains as a fundamental act of maintaining societal group structures, which may be understood within the context of TLs projections on the world at large. Formerly focused on local groups and societies of specific territories by the founders of our discipline (Tylor, Frazer, Morgan, Boas, Malinowski, Mead, etc.), we aim to broaden the discussion and understand it within the global realm in interconnection with states relations through the ecumene; starting from the initial incest taboo as core of group constructions through the exchange of women with external collectives: exogamy as a planetary system of interrelations through perceptions of reciprocity; what inflicts the discovery of kin-relatives everywhere (Mauss, 1966; Levi-Strauss, 1971; Strathern, 1988; etc.).

This theoretical setting which goes from classical anthropologists up to recent discussions of beyond border interconnectivity (Hannerz, 1989; Turner, 1991; Appadurai, 1996; a.m.) provides a fundamental basis in order to discuss relations between countries and people through the proposal of ecumene projections.

Furthermore, if we refer to nation-states as a mix of a kind of family extension (nation) and a bureaucratic process of power (state), ecumene projections cross the idea of a limited nation-state (a construction of modernity as an ideology) in terms of established cognitive borders (Pina-Cabral, 2010); and keeps doing so in contemporary times for coping with the present and to construct the future.

Hence, when considering TL as a relevant case study, the aim is to discuss the context of foreigners who come to TL and are received as a returning family member

through the framework of Globalization theories and international relations. Following this, when exploring such a bi-dimensional approach (the relation between states; ecumene projections), we intend to go one step further in questioning if regional organizations (CPLP; ASEAN; Commonwealth; etc.) may be seen through two different gazes: through international relations and through anthropology. Hence, the proposition we make is to pinpoint the latest one throughout narratives in TL as coping strategy for new situations and new times within the global realm.

Finally, with the concept ‘Stranger Kings’ (Sahlins, 1981) TLs inside-outside relations will be explored deeper. Through this idea, Sahlins discusses the dimension of beyond border interrelations within the local realm through the narrative of the returning outsider, which can be contextualized as a coping strategy with foreign takeovers of local territories - concretely, colonialism. Connecting to this, several ethnographies of TL deal with narratives of the brothers from abroad (as justification of foreign presence in the country through myths of the elder and the younger brother (Fox, 1996; Traube, 2011; Bovensiepen, 2015)). Furthermore, narratives of Europeans as part of the Timorese descent line play a relevant role, when regarding the Portuguese colonization of the country in the past (and therefore, coping strategies towards several power relations). Various ethnographies (on TL) occurred which are concretely approaching the connection between the inside and the outside worlds. Anthropologists specialized on TL such as Bovensiepen, McWilliam, Fox, Traube, Hohe, Seixas, Leach, etc. provide evidences in form of narratives focusing on how TLs society constructs beyond border relations through imaginations (perceptions on the Ecumene from below) (e.g.: Bovensiepen, 2015; Fox, 1996; Traube, 2007; Sousa, 2010; Seixas, 2016; McWilliam & Traube, 2011, a.m.).

This outline may be directly linked to Sahlins’ idea and the relevance behind meta-narratives. We may understand his construction in terms of transformation processes which are a result of basic reproductive actions (Sahlins, 2008: 125). With the identification of the relevance of narratives, the formation of new categories for coping with current mechanisms is of great fortune for a bigger collective of individuals in order to deal with new times/new situations. This gives evidence for the power of narratives, metaphors and myths, which create long-term structures of societies (Sahlins, 2008: 125), considering that oral traditions vs. script traditions (Goody, 1987) do play a great role in

reproducing and transforming the past, for coping with the present and shaping the future with evidences for two beyond border approaches: the ecumene and the relation between states.

Methodology

For exploring this master's dissertation research, a triangulation of methods (Bernard, 2006) has been applied (document analysis, bibliographical research, interviews). The empirical data from the field was collected in a previous study on TL in the international context which we³ have participated in (CRISEA), more profoundly discussed in later steps. Being an assistant researcher within this project, I had the opportunity to combine my master dissertation with the ongoing research, for which reason I had access to a multiplicity of data on how TLs local people, its civil society organizations and the government create ecumene projections within this specific bi-dimensional approach on beyond border relations. In course of this, narratives have been collected which tackle this problematic within the (anthropological) library and in the field. When said, in the field; here, it is concretely talked about primary data gathered⁴ within formerly conducted interviews in TL in course of the CRISEA project with state leaders, civil society servants and university students of International Relations and Political Sciences. This fieldwork has been conducted within the H2020 project of the European Union, named *Competing International Integration in Southeast Asia*, by the end of 2018. Within this project, we precisely pinpoint the "[...] the evolution of the ASEAN project within the global geopolitical and geo-economic context, with particular attention to the Association's legitimacy – both in the process of its enlargement, past and present – and in the face of, what has been argued, is a crisis of globalization." (CRISEA, 2019). One of my personal main tasks within the CRISEA project was to collect data in documents, books and on the internet; and to transcribe and analyze the interviews which were conducted by one of our research colleagues in TL.

Following the research focus within this project, I have contributed to an extensive content analysis of in TL conducted interviews, whereof our groups of interest (State leaders, Civil Society, Business experts and University Students) referred to regional

³ The Portuguese research team on the CRISEA project in the context of TL and ASEAN.

⁴ The data was gathered by our research colleague Sofia Miranda in form of qualitative fieldwork through conducting interviews in TL. My personal task was to transcribe and analyze the interviews sent to us by her.

groupings (ASEAN, CPLP, Asia Pacific, etc.) as families and Europeans as brothers from abroad. These specific projections of the most recent times do reveal another ground for the construction of global regions for re-discovering spatial belonging in the world at large.

Leaning on the structure of an ethnographic approach enables a proper analysis of the problematic of this dissertation, which is the construction of international regions through ecumene projections. Therefore, as mentioned above a triangulation of methods (bibliographical research, documents analysis, interview conduction/ transcription/ analysis) has been applied in order to gain the relevant variety of material to discuss this proposal, which pinpoints ecumene projections from various social contexts of Timor-Leste within the anthropological research tradition. Due to the type of data used for this work, an interpretivist approach has been pursued, which was chosen in course of trying to understand and grasp the projections of people and their realities onto a specific phenomenon.

This research has been explored in a transversal timeframe (past and present), what means concretely that firstly, material has been used which was collected previously within the CRISEA research project in 2018 and 2019 and secondly, has been re-used for the present master thesis with another focus point. As mentioned earlier, this material covers several interviews and documents on the admission procedure of Timor-Leste to ASEAN. Furthermore, research has been undertaken within the anthropological library; what concretely means the collection of data on beyond border narratives in the area of Timor-Leste, provided by experts of our field. Finally, an interpretation of the collected data has been undertaken, supporting the proposal of a new avenue – coping with new times and new realities.

Hence, as mentioned above, data has been applied which was previously gathered, as well as written ethnographies which are addressing the problematic of this dissertation. The togetherness of narratives from the anthropological library and the field are of main importance for the discussion of the construction of global regions/interconnectivity when considering the case study of Timor-Leste. The ethnographies which have been collected do have their focus precisely on inside-outside relations of Timor-Leste; which have been discovered through determining the State of Art.

The focus point is the analysis of narratives (both from the library and the field) and how people construct a new realm through them. Therefore, language as such serves as a common form of content organization as well as for the representation of ontological patterns. Content and form of a narrative and the details of lines or even single words have to be examined and carefully analyzed, which reveals the shared cultural schema of a society (Hymes, 1977: 432). It appears as relevant to understand the remarkable within the collective of narratives and imaginations and their importance in the context of international relations. Through these methods it is intended to come closer towards our question if there is the existence of ecumene perceptions from below in Timor-Leste's narratives, contributing to the building of international regions. Oral traditions as coping strategies with global interrelations are here of great interest, using the newest nation of the 21st century, which has suffered a long period of external power influences (Portuguese colonization 1894; Indonesian occupation 1975-1999), as a case study (Fox, 2011; Pina-Cabral, 2010).

Concluding, it has to be stated that within anthropology, we have to be as open and flexible as possible in order to give the necessary value to situations, places and people we try to understand. Through using a multiplicity of methods, I want to enable a broad discussion and understanding of the outlined problematic. We should always be aware of the fact that everything we achieve in the field is relative. Value has to be given to people's narratives and imaginations of the world, as well as social constructions. It is necessary to reflect over one's own position as much as over the others (Bernard, 2006). Who am I as a researcher, what is my social context when entering the field, what structures am I embedded into and how will the world, which I'm going to enter, perceive me as an individual and at the same time, as a researcher? How am I able to overcome certain structures and models of science when being located within a specific context? And how will this influence my surroundings? Therefore, the aim is to open up the discourse for a broad audience in order to understand Timorese imaginations of expanded alliances as coping strategies with new times and new realities.

1. Beyond border relations: A bi-dimensional approach

The world in its interrelatedness is, moreover, understood through a bi-dimensional discourse: perspectives from IR which focus on states relations and anthropology which

considers people and social organization as a prevailing ground. Both Anthropology and International Relations (IR) provide quite a great amount of material when considering the world at large. Even though, the core argument of this thesis is that perspectives from below are greatly dis-considered in mainstream discussions on the planetary context.

We are proposing the ecumene as a construct in order to tackle people's projections of the global context, bounded by specific social organizations (Hannerz, Robertson, Pina-Cabral).

Hegemonic ideology presents the world in a greater context with its links and associations primarily through the relations and discourses between states. This theme is a main one in IR, much more than it is – speaking of the macroscale with its political and economic conditions – in anthropology. When bearing the building of international regions in mind (as will be of great relevance within this work); they have been treated until recently as economic phenomena only – such as through international non-governmental organizations, regional organizations/groupings (such as ASEAN, CPLP, etc.), global civil society, and more. Considering these approaches closer, there are certain gaps in IR when it comes to the discourse of the world at large. Even though, there are approaches which slowly fill those gaps through new discourses with understanding cultural values and intersubjective exchange as relevant. Nevertheless, there is a lack of inclusion of the cultural and social facets through imaginations, narratives and perceptions from below – which will be elaborated on in a later section through the relevance of the ecumene in beyond border relations. This dissertation intends to highlight the perspectives from below and by this, to eventually establish a discussion of the interaction between anthropology and IR when taking exactly such beyond border relations as a relevant field for the construction of new realities into account.

When firstly considering Anthropology's approach towards this issue, the cultural dimension is of great importance for the discussion.

“Cultural interrelatedness increasingly reaches across the world. More than ever, there is now a global ecumene. To grasp this fact, in its wide range of manifestations and implications, is the largest task now confronting a macro-anthropology of culture.” (Hannerz, 1989: 66)

This precise idea can be linked to IR, which have its focus on the multiplicity of states working together in strategic political ways. It is of no surprise that both perspectives are relevant to be discussed in an interdisciplinary manner, which has been barely undertaken until the present day (Reus-Smit, 2019; Acharya, 2005; etc.).

Furthermore, we may consider both disciplinary approaches through the idiom of (global) *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (Tönnies, 1887; Robertson, 1995). With these ideal types, Tönnies classifies two poles of society which are projections of the human will: natural (passions, informal relations, amity, kinship) vs. artificial (interests, formal relations, economic contracts, administrative and political hierarchies). When using the term *Gemeinschaft*, he defines communities through their social ties, feelings and imaginations, whereof interactions are face-to-face and based on kinship/amity values and rules which establish the structure of the social micro-organization. Of core relevance here are emotional expressions, whereof moral responsibilities and commitments emerge. This classification may be used to understand the approach of anthropology towards understanding the reality constructions of individuals within society. When looking closer at the other pole – *Gesellschaft* –, Tönnies explains the rather indirect connection between individuals and groups of interests of a society through formal/bureaucratic relations in a social structure dominated by organization in the urban realm. Ultimately, in the ideal type of *Gesellschaft* by Tönnies, states relations and the use of certain tools for establishing of such are prevailing. Characteristic for the term *Gesellschaft* are formal values which function on a macro-level in order to establish the social organization of people within a bigger shared territory (on the level of the nation-state), strongly tied to economic and political interests (as could be exemplified with the construction of regional organizations). Even though Tönnies' definition has to be understood as idioms within the boundaries of a nation-state; similar to Robertson (1995) we understand it as very suitable to use this construction in order to explain a much bigger phenomenon: the global interrelation of people, seen through both the gaze of anthropology and IR, micro- and macro-perceptions.

Furthermore, imagined communities by Benedict Anderson is also relevant for this discussion. He explains new nationalisms through a relation between scattered communities and the nation state at large, tackling particular elements which work as mediators between micro and the macro: maps, museums, census, print capitalism. We

may raise the question if such connections are not being established by now, putting together people and states in a larger domain in form of ‘International Imagined Communities’ (Seixas, Mendes & Lobner, 2019).

In order to provide a better understanding of the bi-dimensional approach towards the world at large, we may briefly outline the ground of each one; firstly, anthropology; secondly, IR.

i. Anthropological approach

In anthropological discussions about the world at large, the socio-cultural dimension of perceiving life are clearly on the foreground when it comes to the construction of realities. Intersubjective perspectives are of core relevance for understanding beyond border relations from below. In this debate, we consider narratives and imaginations of great importance when it comes to coping mechanisms with new times, new spaces and therefore, the construction of new realm (Appadurai, 1996).

Kin relations (or kinship) on its core have always been a relevant aspect within our discipline in order to understand the various dynamics behind social organizations – may it be local, or global. Kin relations; as we will see through the case study of Timor-Leste, are the on the basis of local perceptions on social realities – which we propose to be the basis of the ecumene. Hence, when using the ecumene as main theme of beyond border relations, we need to make a link to classical anthropological discussions which firstly enable an understanding of previous perceptions on beyond border relations. If we go far back within our discipline, anthropological comprehensions and explanations about the households, the exchange of women and alliances between kingdoms serve well as starting point for understanding the core of social organization, established from below (Levi-Strauss, 1971; Mauss, 1966; etc.). This avenue may be relevant for the construction of the macro-sphere from its core and the therefore, the relation between states. Through such a terminology we are able to question the personal, economic, ideological and social functions of narrating beyond border relations. The imagination of kin expansions (previously mainly discussed in micro-terms within our discipline) beyond borders may be a way analyze relations between *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft*; emotional proximity and larger bounds (Levi-Strauss, 1971; Tönnies, 1887; Anderson, 1983; etc.). Kin beyond

borders certainly had economic and social functions in which exogamy was used moreover in order to stabilize relations (here perceived through the micro- as well through the macro-gaze). The relevance of this approach will be pinpointed through the case study of Timor-Leste, considering the imagination of (ancient) kin-relations between kingdoms and eventually to the rest of the world, as is the case with Europe, CPLP and concretely, Portugal; but also in terms of neighborhood and geographical proximity – further elaborated on in a later section).

Thinkers such as Ferdinand Tönnies, Roland Robertson, Ulf Hannerz and Arjun Appadurai serve well for the discussion of beyond border constructions from below in globalization terms within our discipline. The importance of tackling this research avenue through an anthropological approach on IR lays in the exactly such an examination of the analysis of global interconnectedness through local perceptions, considering various meaning systems to be at stake.

Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, when discussing the interrelation between states and people in terms of beyond border constructions (or interconnections between the global and the local), Ferdinand Tönnies idea of *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* (1887) occurs to be of importance again. Through this, international state relations may be understood in terms of projections of a natural will with the case study of Timor-Leste. Communities (perspectives from below) are closely tied to the understanding of the society as a whole. This leads to the discussion of various kinds of social interconnectedness between rural (‘traditional’) societies and urban (‘modern’) structures – as is here proposed to be the case with Timor-Leste and the beyond border narratives with the imagination of kinship at large, following the broad variety of the country’s imaginations on origin, descend and interconnection.

Not least to mention here is Appadurai’s concept of the Community of Feelings (1991). Within this frame, he speaks of a group which begins to imagine and feel things together, between people who have never been in face-to-face contact and begin to think of themselves in terms of a common whole (Appadurai 1996: 8). He refers to collective experiences which cross the bounded nation-state through, for instance, mass media – similar to what Benedict Anderson has stated in his idea on imagined communities through print capitalism (Anderson, 1983). Such collective experiences beyond borders may create what Appadurai calls ‘sodalities’: “They are communities in themselves, but

always potentially communities for themselves capable, of moving from shared imaginations to collective actions.” (Appadurai, 1996: 8)

Sodalities, as he puts it, are trans- or even post-national through operating beyond the allegedly fixed boundaries of a nation-state. Furthermore, he outlines that for many societies, modernity is something that happens elsewhere – the same as the ‘global’ is by many commonalities seen as nothing more than a temporal wave, which is therefore translated by people into their own terms and realities: “Globalization [...] obscured the lines between temporary locales and imaginary national attachments.” (Appadurai, 1996: 9).

Such feeling-based constructions by individuals who find a common sense to others far beyond the fixed borders of a nation-state is on the core of the ecumene constructions discussed throughout this text; visible in graphic 1 in a later section (1.2. The World as Ecumene). Following this, the proposal is that the ecumene is a projection by people in order to construct a new realm, through imaginations, feelings and perceptions. This can be directly related to Appadurai’s understanding of a community of feelings which creates a realm on their own beyond borders; and Tönnies understanding of emotional proximity within a *Gemeinschaft*.

Furthermore, Appadurai established a dialogue and a dialectic between ‘homogenization and indigenization’, which is not far away from Ulf Hannerz idea of ‘creolization’ and the reaction to diversity’ in relation to the center and the periphery (Hannerz, 1992). Appadurai’s perspectives on the different ‘scapes’ (ethno, ideal, finance, media and techno) are grounded within situational imaginations which come to the forefront in a diversity of encounters (Appadurai, 1991). Such a ‘hybridization’ (in relation to the imagination of international regions) results in a projection of state(s) relations and local perspectives (as is the case with beyond border narratives in Timor-Leste). Here, we have to consider Hannerz construction on the global ecumene closer. Universes of meanings through which people construct their realities (day-by-day realities) make part of forming social organization to cope with new times in the global realm (Hannerz, 1992: 228). Following these constructions, we may understand the building of international regions from the periphery through the articulation of local imaginations towards the global realm.

This dimension of a global interrelatedness should emphasize the relevance of the ecumene on the fore. Understanding it from an anthropological perspective with the above outlined discourse, beyond border relations do not only rely on narratives and perceptions of individuals; they are always in exchange and interaction with the dimension of the relation between states – even if this has not been concretely considered in literature so far. This leads us to the exploration of how IR is envisioning the world at large – and how this may be (or should be) related to the constructions of anthropology.

ii. International Relations approach

When it comes to perspectives on global interrelatedness within the discipline of IR, the world at large is mainly seen as a relation between states. This discussion can be considered through the three main strands of IR: Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism⁵ approaches. Beyond border relations, as in discussion within this work, have been – through these trends – mainly addressed through an economic and political point of view, tackling institutions and the links they establish between countries on a global scale. Saying so, perspectives from below have been, to its great extent over the years, of much less importance for understanding global interrelations, such as is the case with realism- and liberalism-perspectives.

Constructivism theory has been the first attempt to include the cultural dimension for looking closer at the world at large. Even though, literature seems to be very limited when it comes to the consideration of the cultural and identity dimension through the people themselves (Reus-Smit, 2019). We may firstly take the previous mentioned approaches into account, which still seem to be on the frontstage when it comes to the discussion of states-relations. Realism, for instance, has its core focus on states and power, de-considering any other impact and interrelation. Here, the state is seen as a rational actor who approaches cooperation and interaction with other states in order to maximize its own security - which always indicates self-interest as main motivation to (inter)act (Acharya, 2005).

⁵ In this concrete work, less attention is paid to the more recent reflectivist theories (Marxism, feminism, etc.), due to the interest in the core of the discipline and how the most famous constructions towards the world at large are framed. Even though, it is not intended to decline its relevance for further discussions and deeper consultation.

Further on, Liberalism understands states, NGOs and other inter-governmental organizations as main performer within the international system. Hence, international institutions are within this strand of core relevance for the interaction between states and organizations. Nevertheless, the international system is seen as an anarchic one through this gaze; considering – similar to realism – that states are acting through self-interests only. The focus is highly set on the role of institutions for the acting state (Keane, 2003; Acharya, 2005; Reus-Smit, 2019). Lastly, when considering constructivism for our discussion, we come closer to an anthropological mindset towards beyond border relations. Even though, still having the state and its institutions in its core, the cultural dimension starts to play a role for understanding the actions of the prevailing ones. Through this perspective, identities are understood as influencing states and institutions in their decision-making and interaction with others. State interaction, therefore, occurs to be socially constructed by interests from below (Wendt, 1992; Acharya, 2005).

Nevertheless, when looking at these three strands towards the discussion of the world at large, states remain as the main actor for inter-connectedness. Even though, through the constructivism approach, a bridge can be established to the perspective of anthropology which discusses beyond border relations through a socially constructed reality. This opens the door for understanding the importance of an interdisciplinary manner.

iii. Ecumene projections: a proposal

We propose to consider that ecumene projections may also be understood as a tool. It can be seen as the capacity which cultures/nations have in order to be mediators or cultural brokers in the context of the world at large by projecting primary social networks onto it (such as is the case with families, extended families, households, alliances, friendship networks, peer-to-peer networks, etc.). Therefore, we may say that ecumene projections are used in a world-centric manner, in order to make sense of today's global interconnectedness. This can be seen as complementary to country-centric projections, in which the role of the state is of core relevance in establishing relations. Both approaches frame a certain strategy to cope with positioning itself towards other entities in the context of the world at large.

Ecumene Projections

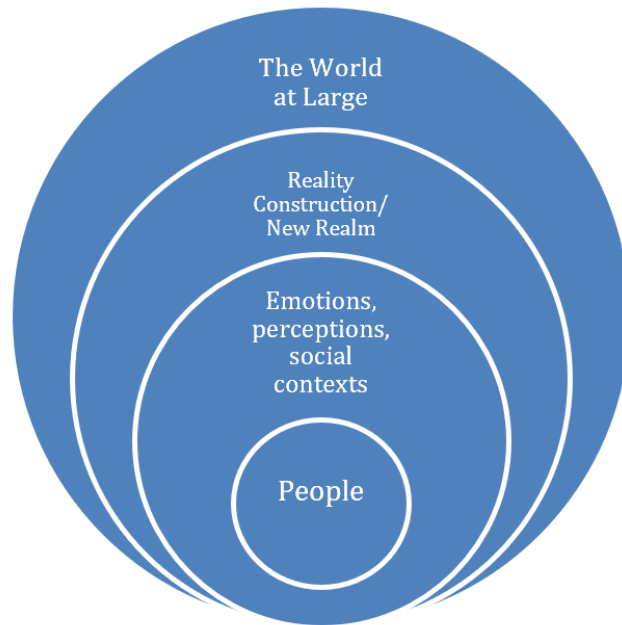


Figure 1

As this graphic represents, our proposal is that people's emotions (friendship, passion, etc.), perceptions (using senses for recognition) and social contexts (extended families, households, alliances, peers, etc.) are used for creating a new realm, to construct a new reality. This establishes projections towards the world at large in its bigger context.

In the following two sections, both approaches will be discussed in a deeper way. Firstly, the world as a relation between states, following by the perception of the world through the ecumene projections.

1.1.The world as a relation between states

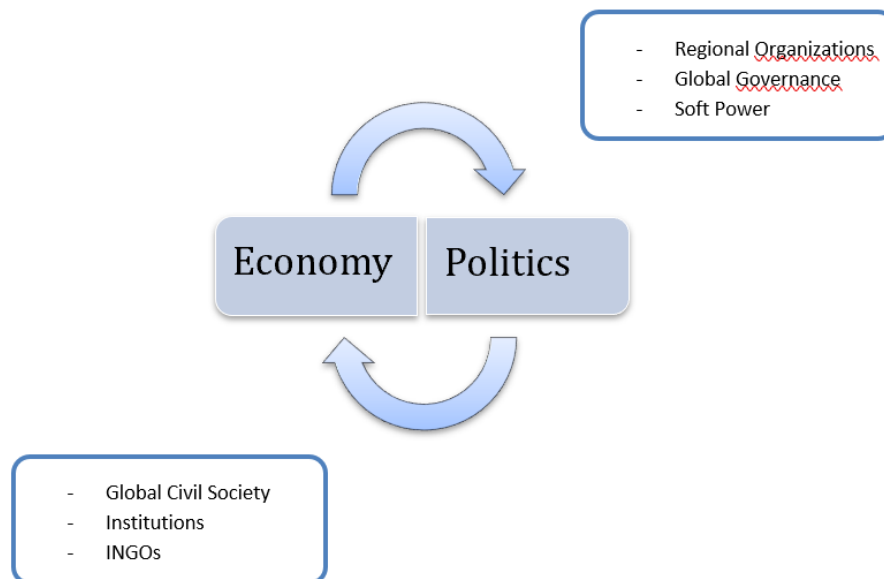


Figure 2

As briefly outlined in the previous section on the approach of IR, we have to consider the understanding of the world in terms of a relation between states. Keeping in mind that this work aims to broaden the existing discourses on beyond border relations, and coming precisely from an anthropological approach, a few facts have to be discussed in order to understand the relevance of reciprocity between anthropology and IR in such terms.

We may directly look at the previously tackled IR approach of constructivism in which states relations are not just a result of power and wealth (Acharya, 2005). Even more it considers subjective and inter-subjective factors of great relevance for the relation between states. Ideas, culture, identity constructions and mindset are seen in its individual importance for contributing to the macro-structure as a whole. Therefore, this approach is to be rather understood of sociological ground, considering the interest into collective identity constructions and interaction on the forefront.

Nevertheless, when looking at the two other poles of IR (realism and liberalism), both theoretical grounds reveal the actual focus of IR as it remains a core: a static theoretical trend on the relation between states, defined by material power constructions through international institutions. Although constructivism is trying to go beyond this realm, the focus still lies on institutions as state regulators and power politics (even

though, in a socially constructed way through perspectives on communities for collective identity constructions) (Acharya 2005).

Hence, when considering this framework for the discussion of the relation between states, the contextualization of global interconnections through power is prevailing in IR, with a focus mainly on economic and political phenomena (e.g.: INGOs, soft power, regional organizations and global civil societies under the umbrella of multilateralism (the organization of relations between three or more states) (Mishra, 2012). Keeping this in mind, we will bring some of the core constructions into discussion, which enable a better understanding of beyond border relations in the discourse of IR and the importance of being broadened up.

Taking the existing lack of IR literature into account, it is clear that (even in a constructivism approach) the inclusion of the cultural and social dimensions through people's imaginations is rather weak and, in the majority of discussions, still absent (Reus-Smit, 2019; Sindjoun, 2001). Looking at the world at large as mainly a relation between states puts the relevance of the ecumene projections in economic and political dimensions to stage. Therefore, we have to consider 'culture' in its importance for such global interrelatedness, and how it plays an important role in each dimension. Therefore, this realm will be deeper explored in the next steps, in order to pinpoint the importance of the complementarity between states perspectives and people's perspectives; IR and anthropology.

- *Global Civil Society*

One specific relevant reference within the IR approach towards the world at large is the concept of Global Civil Society (GCS). GSC debates are amongst the prevailing ideas which include the people themselves within the international context and how there is a connection/link at stake. Nevertheless, people's positions are mainly used within the economic and political realm, again disregarding the socio-cultural dimension (as we have discussed above, is the case in all prevailing IR strands). Even though, GCS deserves deeper consideration within this thesis when it comes to the establishment of beyond border relations and how individuals themselves are included within these debates.

When following John Keane (2003), it should be seen a much bigger realm than it has been approached by the discipline in previous terms. GCS is understood as a construct of

globalization and its effects in international terms when it comes to the interrelation between a multiplicity of states. It is not bound to the nation-state; it is rather acting within a transnational realm. As Mishra puts it: “Thus GCS can be defined as the sums of laws, policies and institutions that constitute, and mediate trans-border relations between states, cultures, citizens, intergovernmental and nongovernmental organisations and the market.” (Mishra, 2012: 209)

Referring precisely to the active participation of individuals in global processes with a growing self-organization beyond the political realm of states, it is considered as a togetherness of social relations with the aim of approaching a specific aim/target. May it be environmentally in terms of activism, or may it be in terms of human rights associations, women rights defenders, or other social movements (Mishra, 2012).

Nevertheless, GCS is in first place understood as an economic construction and has to be seen through its agency in political terms. As states all over the planet are increasingly facing a togetherness of global issues such as climate change, human rights, etc., it is inevitable that there is a ‘shared force’ needed which works together on such occurrences – in international terms, beyond the politics of the bounded nation state. What one may firstly think of when it is talked about a GCS is a new mindset towards approaching global issues through an assemble of institutional approaches (NGOs, diplomats, etc.). What comes to the fore within Keane’s understanding of the GCS is the lack/absence of prevailing economic and political approaches of understanding global interrelatedness through local perceptions. He refers to the necessity of pinpointing the dimension of a complex social reality, which has to be dealt with when talking about the GCS. He precisely tackles the non-governmental space which is comprised by self-constructed ways of life by individuals/collectives (movements, households, human rights defenders, religious groups, etc.) themselves – those parts of life which are not the bounded nation-state (Keane, 2003).

This approach of looking towards the world at large differs to the majority of discourses prevalent in IR. The concept of GCS belongs to the very few approaches which have been made in recent time to understand beyond border relations through the importance of including the local into its processes. Nevertheless, it is still a mainly socio-economic and political approach; focusing on institutional patterns and the function of organizations (such as INGOs) as form of a middleman between the local and the global.

Connecting to this, it is of relevance to take a closer look to the concept of global governance, as it gains continuously more relevance within the domain of IR discourse; considering the inclusion of the ‘cultural dimension’ within the greater, global processes of problem-solving; as it will be discussed in the end of this thesis.

- *Global Governance*

When considering the approach of understanding GCS, themes which are concerning the world at large may further be explored through the context of global governance and its agencies (e.g.: UN; WTO; OECD; etc.). This dimension (global governance) comes along with the international domain of civil society and its organizations (INGOs), which are contributing to governance in form of an open dialogue, transparency, dissemination of knowledge and information, etc. (such as, for instance, Amnesty International, Greenpeace, etc.) (Mishra, 2012).

Looking closer at what we have tackled as global governance, it is relevant to state that it became a core theme of attention in IR discourses, specifically when concerning the international system. It is located on the same avenue as the GCS itself; whereof we may speak of the approach towards solving global issues within a political realm without a main authority behind (Mishra, 2012).

Concerning global governance as such, the main target is to approach decision making processes with the attempt to manage common issues on a global scale. Here, the influence and importance of GCS gets its attention within IR, taking the relevance of incorporating NGOs and other non-state actors in terms of governance mechanisms/procedures into account (Keane, 2003; Mishra, 2012), highly increasing the role of GCS in the participation of global governance.

Finally, we may say that there is the awareness within IR debates that social movements (going one step further, we may directly say ‘people from below’) are acting within the domain of the GCS, engaging with global governance agents/agencies and may participate in influencing institutional patterns (or policies) in terms of the global realm. Nevertheless, as pinpointed above through the perspectives of IR, in terms of GCS it is mainly spoken about actions in economic terms (institutional as well as political; with concrete interests at stake), which again excludes individuals and their social context as the actual actors and contributors to such processes. As Mishra outlines in a very fitting

manner is that the interaction between GCS and the institutions of global governance is still mediated through the structure of state sovereignty in ways that prevent the superficial domestic analogy between the state and civil society on the one hand, and GCS as a counterpart to international institutions of global governance on the other. (Colas, 2001, in Mishra, 2010: 211)

- *Regional Organizations*

Another relevant theme within the realm of IR when it comes to the relation between states is ‘regional organizations’ (RO), which are, by now, also seen in terms of international regional organizations (IROs). What is understood under ROs is basically an expression of a common sense between states within a specific geographical proximate territory. Collective actions and identity constructions are in the core of RO, even though in a rather economic and political manner. It is mainly spoken of an institutional togetherness which is approaching specific aims. ROs can be seen as a post-second world war construct as a means to create a protective sphere for a collective of states for promoting human rights and democracy; such as has been the case with the Pacific Community, the Organization of American States, the EU, ASEAN, etc.

It cannot be disregarded that there is always an international interference at stake, for which reason it is spoken of IROs (Nye, 2008). Nye (2008) refers to a mutual interdependence between states over a wider geographical distance far beyond visualizable borders of limited nation-states with supposedly bounded identities. Therefore, the ground of international regionalism may be seen in the building of associations and links in transnational terms, based on the regional construct itself.

ROs cannot be limited to their geographical context anymore, since humanity is facing new challenges such as the environmental issues, climate change, terrorism, etc.; which have all to be approached within a global manner (Gaudry & Abdul, 2017). This complex of the togetherness of state actions in order to approach global issues is exclusively treated as a macro-process with the focus on states as the main actor; out of a political and macro-economic perspective. In this dimension, there is no bottom-up approach included; which means that individuals themselves are clearly disregarded within the processes.

Giving one last example of how IR as a discipline may take people and their cultural values into account when it comes to beyond border relations is the concept of soft power.

- *Soft Power*

When considering soft power as a relevant theme for socially understanding the relation between states as a driver of beyond border relations, we have to bear its actual functions in mind. Soft power is establishing a nation's influence within the worldly realm. In this concept, it is most relevant to contextualize how a nation may reshape international opinions – namely, through 'nation branding'. Nation branding precisely means to enhance a country's reputation within the international domain through the application of certain techniques and tools (Kerr & Wiseman, 2013). If nation branding (through political diplomacy) is done successfully, this may lead to a favorable image for the nation towards the international audience; which further enhances the country's soft power within the international context (Fan, 2008). Under 'soft power' we understand a country's capacity of shaping its image towards the broader (global) audience in a benefitting way through culture, social structure and political values. It takes place through certain forms of communications and narratives; whereof a country may represent itself through silent forms of self-positioning in a specific way towards the world for reaching a desired outcome of a specific situation/interrelation.

“Soft power is the ability to affect others to obtain the outcomes one wants through attraction rather than through payment. A country's soft power rests on its resources of culture, political values and policies. [...] A country may obtain the outcomes it wants in world politics because other countries want to follow it, admiring its values, emulating its example, and/or aspiring its level of prosperity and openness.” (Nye, 2008: 94)

It is also used by agencies and (I)NGOs as a form of subtle power for reaching the approached outcome. Its indirect methods shape the responses of the other party of interest; and may form the outcomes into the desired results (Nye, 2008).

Speaking of soft power in the context of the relation between states and how it may be placed within the beyond border relations tackled in this work, we have to

consider how it is used in order to establish a relation to others within the international context. IR takes a sort of a social dimension into account when consulting international states relations. How this is relatable to our case study will be discussed in later steps. All in all, it can be said that soft power is a tool used by States in order to achieve a desired outcome in the interaction with other States (actors), in which culture is a core value.

Hence, we propose that soft power is a tool in a world led by sovereignties in competition. Ecumene projections, on the contrary, may be seen as a tool within a world cooperative culture context.

1.2.The World as an Ecumene

Considering the world at large through perspectives from below, the focus of this section is set on anthropological debates on beyond border relations. We suggest that the ecumene may be of core relevance in order to discuss this realm. Hence, when elaborating on the anthropological approach towards the world of large, we may look at the concept of the ecumene closer. There are several explanations and ideas around this conceptualization, nevertheless, in course of this thesis it may be put the following way: the ecumene is understood as a projection by people themselves, of their realities constructed through emotions, imaginations and perceptions in order to make sense of the building of a new realm – a new space-, time- and reality within the planetary context (as stated throughout this thesis, beyond-border relations). Ecumene projections, as understood in this case, are situational. They take place in trans- and interregional terms, such as may be exemplified by discourses or imaginations of kin- and emotional proximity applied to regions, ROs, GCS constructions, and other larger realms etc. This discussion serves for the understanding of projections from below for coping with the past, the present and to establish a new ground for the future. When looking closer at the conceptualization of the world at large in anthropological terms (whilst using the ecumene as a matter of discussion), several reflections come to the fore which have been undertaken in our discipline since a great period of time.

Everywhere we go, there are hints and connections to other cultures or ‘beings’, and to its interconnectedness. Humans are continuously in the search of both similarities and differences to ‘others’. We are in an ongoing process of creating a greater context of belonging which goes beyond borders, using certain circumstances situational and for

specific purposes. It seems inevitable to create a compromise when it comes to the construction and understanding of interconnectedness: ecumene projections which contribute to the building of international regions. Humanity needs to adapt to new situations and new times under the shadow of the planet's rapid globalization and interrelation- processes. Stating this, we may understand such processes as living together in a world of multiple (internationally interconnected) regions.

Timor-Leste (represented in a later section) serves well for this discussion in form of a case study; due to its eventual strategic belonging to several regions – may it be CPLP, ASEAN, Asia Pacific, its ties to the EU through Portugal, and not least to mention its imaginations about the small island as the root of all being. Furthermore, its post-colonial context serves as a relevant point for this discussion, bearing the country's beyond border narratives as coping strategies in mind for the construction of new (international) regions through ecumene projections.

Hence, Timor-Leste may be understood as a relevant arena to understand the great diversity of interrelations and interactions; taking place on the same terrain: a middle ground for understanding what the future might become in a negotiation mission for globalization. Two avenues are inevitable to be discussed when the conceptualization of the ecumene is at stake in anthropological terms: i. prevailing ideas on the world at large and ii. future perspectives as a new contribution. As stated above, several anthropologists have dealt with this issue before; may it be, for instance, in the context of colonization (Lewis Henry Morgan, Edward Tylor; Wilhelm Schmidt; Alfred Kroeber, etc.)⁶, thereafter post-colonial deconstructions of previously existing (due to time and space very limited) ideas of the world at large (Gayatri Spivak; Steward Hall; Homi Bhabha; Nestor Canclini; Louise Pratt; etc.); or present-time discourses on globalization (Hannerz, 1992; Robertson, 1995; Appadurai, 1996; Pina-Cabral, 2010; etc.). Hence, these avenues may path the way for discussing the building of international regions.

Before starting to look closer to various perceptions, understandings and definitions of the ecumene in anthropological terms, it is relevant to firstly discuss the linguistic background of the word itself. The ecumene as such has its roots in the Greek

⁶ These classical anthropologists made sense of the world at large in their own terms. Nowadays, we are not moving within their perspectives anymore, but its relevant to also consider/include these attempts in order to make sense of the present.

term ‘oikoumene’, which refers to the world as an inhabited space. The term ‘oikos’ refers to the family and the house. ‘Mene’ can be translated with the English term ‘me’, for which reason the oikoumene may be understood as ‘our common house’ (Geus, 2016). It spread out its roots onto the Roman Empire, in which it was used to define civilization. Further on, the Christian church made usage of it in order to term the unity of different traditions. This also applies in the same way to the dialogue between the Christian church and other religious contexts. Broadly, it seems to be used to define social and emotional proximity as it is the case in other similar concepts: such as with ‘brotherhood’ in Muslim perceptions (implying loyalty and a general common ground for action) (Beer & Gardener, 2015). Using ecumene in religious terms, it already gives us a reference to its inevitable global function; regarding the fact that religion as such goes far beyond borders in the construction of interrelatedness.

Before starting with the analysis of recent discussions of the ecumene within anthropological terms, it seems inevitable to make a historical jump into the past of the discipline for understanding the first precise conceptions/thoughts on the human interconnectedness of our world at large – precisely through the terminology of the ecumene. Although it must be noted that using classical anthropological thoughts/thinkers on this specific topic, critical attention has to be paid to its context as a whole. Hence, the purpose of briefly discussing the ecumene from quite ancient perspectives of our field is to not deny the past of our discipline. Being aware of the fact that several paradigms, theories and ways of thinking have been more than overcome in course of time, we must not forget that even though a certain influence of the past has led us to the knowledge and reflections we are able to hold in the present times.

When concretely talking about the Ecumene and the first anthropological rationalities on it, we may refer to a diffusionist perspective such as the one from Alfred Kroeber. As far as we know, Kroeber has been the first anthropologist who proposed to understand the construction of global human interconnectedness (to be clear, in terms of cultural diffusion) through the ‘oikoumene’; as it has been pre-existing in Greek conceptualizations discussed in the beginning of this section (Kroeber, 1945; Kroeber, 1963: 231, in Pina-Cabral, 2010: 11).

One of the most recent and indeed relevant discussions on the ecumene has been undertaken by Ulf Hannerz. When considering his ideas on worldly interconnectedness

closer, humanity may be understood as a ‘network of networks’, where human intercommunication does not face the idea of space and time.

Hannerz describes previous anthropological constructions on globalization (throughout the path of post-colonial deconstructions) as distinctions between center and periphery; as asymmetries. He questions how such allegedly worldly asymmetries may affect meanings of cultural expression (Hannerz, 1989; Hannerz, 1992: 219). He understands cultural production as a symptom of the periphery, which can be seen as a response to the opposing enhanced power structures of the center. Hannerz’ representation of the interaction between center and periphery in its various dimensions reveal in exactly what he calls the global ecumene. He uses the definition of creolization in order to make the intermingling of the global and the local more visible. Cultures, therefore, cannot be seen anymore as ‘well-bounded wholes’ (Hannerz 1992: 266), they rather have to be understood in its flows between countries, regions and hemispheres through transnational connections; ‘based more on interconnectedness than on autonomy’ (Hannerz, 1992: 166).

“It also allows the sense of a complex culture as a network of perspectives, or as an ongoing debate. People can come into it from the diaspora, as consultants and advisors, or they can come into it from the multiform local cultures, from the bush. The outcome is not predicted. Creolization thought is open-ended; the tendencies toward maturation and saturation are understood as quite possibly going on side by side, or interweaving.”

(Hannerz 1992: 266)

Therefore, the global ecumene is clearly at stake in the interaction of cultural conditions between the center and the periphery, rather than a separated field of conduct. As Hannerz tries to make clear, there cannot be a simple division of two separated zones anymore (if this has ever been the case). Even more, we have to see humanity in its totality as much as individuality; as results of flows, of contact, of interaction and of proximity beyond borders. The global ecumene, therefore, is a result of such previous distinctions through the movement of people in colonial terms – ongoing with political and economic

interests on the distinction of humanity into separated areas. Yet, it is obvious that this has been overcome already – and we may see it through the gaze of the global ecumene.

Another anthropological definition of such is of great relevance: the understanding of regions – global regions – through the ecumene by the anthropologist Sidney Mintz, who understands the Caribbean as an interconnected sociocultural area (ecumene)⁷ (Mintz, 1996). In his studies of the Caribbean and his analysis on its homogenous features such social organization and forms of social structure he clearly states the point of the region's interrelatedness which goes far beyond arbitrarily constructed borders – the ecumene through a shared history/experiences. Even though Mintz primarily focuses on the Caribbean as a region and its interconnectedness through several spotlights in course of past historical events (in terms of colonization, migration, habitation); this space-time experience does not consider culture, language and socialization as primary driver for such a relatedness.

Although focusing on one region such as is here the case with the Caribbean, it reveals a model of an eventual extension of a global interconnectedness in form of the ecumene: a planetary common humanity. Having faced historically equal forms of habitation and movement within the region does indeed uncover a common sense between people who do not share any other outstanding aspects – regarding the diversity of the region itself.

When following this idea which is regionally located on a recognizable 'united' geographical area (in the sense of mapping), we may move one step further towards the conceptualization of the anthropologist João Pina-Cabral, who states that Lusotopy should be considered as an ecumene itself, it shows a quite more complex dimension of interconnectedness than the regional locatable and geographically proximate Caribbean, as in Mintz's idea. Spotting the Caribbean with one glance at a modern geographical map, the Lusotopian area needs more attention in order to be grasped. It needs distinction, definition, separation. As Pina-Cabral states in one of his essays on Lusotopy as an

⁷ This idea is an obvious reference to the cultural areas trend of diffusionism. Even though, the Caribbean evokes a new society, which means a creole society that is built from the intermingling of colonial histories. Hence, the Caribbean is eventually a creole model that fits the idea of Hannerz on the global ecumene: eventually, besides this model/ideal type we may find other models which should be further discussed. We may question if it is necessary to create a new society through creolization like in the Caribbean, or if there are other models to follow.

Ecumene, it cannot be divided in single countries/spaces as such. We cannot just take all Portuguese speaking countries and put them together, framing them under the term Lusotopian area. More than that, it is the togetherness of Portuguese influences in areas all around the world, sharing a common sense which goes beyond language, culture and sociality. When simplifying it, it frames Portuguese speaking countries; countries with a Portuguese colonial past, and countries with strong Portuguese habitation due to historical contexts (e.g.: Portuguese Jewish exiles) and places of tense working migration structures (e.g.: France; Switzerland). Putting all these (which are only a few examples) together in one pot, we can see that in many cases we cannot frame a clear connection through ‘culture’ for instance, or language (as is the case with Timor-Leste, for having Portuguese as the official national language due to its colonial past; nevertheless, barely spoken throughout the country).

When speaking about interconnectedness within regional zones (like the Caribbean through Mintz’ perspective), we may zoom into Pina-Cabral’s perception of Lusotopy as an ecumene. Lusotopy, as referred above, cannot be spotted with a single glance on a modern geographical map. He proposes that there is another rather clear interconnectedness between lusotopic spaces – which is based on the concept of amity (or kinship). Here he talks about spaces instead of countries – due to the various distinctions of the term Lusotopy itself. Lusotopy, referring to Portuguese heritage in one or the other way, reveals several phenomena which are cross-cutting each other within a global realm. But what does connect people from lusotopic spaces? May it eventually be a network of networks, an ‘undivided space of human intercommunication’ (Hannerz, 1996), based on a common ground of action? As Pina-Cabral proposes (2010), the choice of amity plays a great role for the construction of an international region; or, as we may say, an interconnectedness in terms of the world at large. He refers to features such as family and friendship beyond borders which contribute to constructing social personhood (Pina-Cabral 2010: 2). By using these features to characterize personhood constructions beyond borders he tackles the emotional constitution which underlies the dimension of kinship (and/or friendship). He goes deeper when stating that amity (on the roots of kinship) should be perceived in the way humans construct their own personhood through how they recognize others or are recognized, what leads to a sense of belonging and self-definition.

Following this, he proposes the dimensions of space and time as drivers of a global interconnectedness/modes of identification; the ecumene, which we may refer once more as a catalyst for the construction of international regions through emotional bonds and proximity. Hence, we propose that this dimension, as discussed in an earlier section, needs to be strongly considered when international relations (relations between states) are contextualizing the world at large.

Pina-Cabral tackles the sociocultural universe created through human interconnectedness through referring to areas of global integration and areas of local specificity, which may be understood as spaces of human action, where construction and destruction take place: a space of ‘discoveries’ (Pina-Cabral, 2010: 12). Following this argument, such human constructions of spaces beyond borders may be understood as the building of international regions. Even though Pina-Cabral precisely refers to Lusotopy and its sense of community-making; we see it as evidence for constructing international regions through perceptions, imaginations, feelings and narratives.

We may not forget that one of the main questions is if there may be international regions under construction through beyond border narratives – a projection from below. Considering international regionalism as a core theme in IR (in the context of states-relations), it seems relevant to anthropologically question what it means for individuals to belong to an international community and if there is a reference between their narratives, perceptions and projections. This will be discussed through the case of Timor-Leste’s society, which considers the island as origin of all being through kin terms (brothers): ecumene projections at stake. Looking at the several existing narratives within a broad variety of ethnographies on Timor-Leste, connections can be made with the relation of family perceptions and international regions; as has been introduced above with using the term ‘brother’ and specifically ‘older brothers from abroad’. This reveals the imagination of a system of international familiar connections/lineages, which seem to be a kind of replication of ancestral narratives. The world system, therefore, should be understood as a source of diversity and interactions which enable the generation of new realities (Hannerz, 1992: 225).

Ideal types of the Ecumene

Cases	Region/Geographical Area	Cultural Facets	New Common Sense	Ideal types
The Caribbean	+	-	+	Creolization
Lusotopy	-	+ -	+	Amity
Timorese Space	+ -	+	+	Global Lineages

Figure 3

As the anthropological library reveals, three ideal types are to be found (and relevant) for the discussion of ecumene: creolization, amity and global lineages. As represented in the table above, these ideal types are established through the geographical dimension, cultural facets and lastly, a new common sense. When taking Timor-Leste as an example, beyond border relations as an imagination from below brings the dimension of the building of international regions through ecumene projections to the fore; as it should be considered in IR perspectives when approaching the world at large.

In the next section, a presentation of Timor-Leste's relation to the world at large will take place, following by data from the library and data from the field.

2. Timor-Leste and its relation to the world at large

When referring to Timor-Leste and its relation to the world at large, there are several indicators which have to be considered as relevant for the discussion. Firstly, we should take a deeper look on why Timor-Leste may play a relevant role for discussing this point. As mentioned earlier, the small country could eventually be understood as a mirror of reflections, being in the middle of several global players. Even in a historical perspective, Timor-Leste may be seen as center of a clash of civilizations, being the Timorese mix of indigenous people and several migration movements from a diversity of cardinal origins. Speaking in macro-terms, it's inevitable to strive the country's relation to several regions, which might be understood through a multiple strategic belonging. Participating in groupings such as CPLP, ASEAN, Commonwealth, Asia Pacific, G7+, EU (through its relation to Portugal), etc. reveals its interrelatedness on a global scale. We may not disregard the relevance of the intermingling of the micro- and the macro; what means that when zooming in to local conceptualizations of livelihood and beyond border relations, terms such as kin, family, brothers, etc. are at stake. We have to deeply consider the relevance of the certain imaginations which evolve on a local level towards the world at

large, when dealing with ecumene constructions from both micro- and macro-perspectives.

Furthermore, we may not overlook the historical facts Timor-Leste has been facing. Several foreign power relations have marked the country in an intrusive way. It has firstly been taken over by the Portuguese in the year of 1769. This first official colonial arrival lasted until 1975; the year in which Timor-Leste gained its unilateral declaration of freedom (Leach, 2016). Considering the withdrawal of their former colonizers, the country's freedom didn't get much of a support regionally (as well as in an international context, considering the political conditions after 2WW in global terms). Keeping in mind that this has taken place in the midst of the cold war, there has been fear on the growth of communism in the southeast Asian region (and the world at large); what was considered by greater powers such as the US as a great threat. Therefore, Indonesia decided to take over Timor-Leste (supported by Australia, the US, ..), occupy the small nation and turn it into its 27th province; with the allegedly aim of preventing the rise of communism (Leach, 2016). It may not be of a great surprise that the invasion of Timor-Leste by Indonesia in 1975 did not receive much of a critic in an international context. Although, it has to be stated that Indonesia's arrival was far from being peaceful and in a cooperative manner. Much more than that, the small country was facing forms of cruelty and the abuse of power which is not comparable to its former experiences with its Portuguese colonizers (Leach, 2016). The Indonesian occupation lasted 25 more years, until there has been a Timorese rebellion against its invaders; whereof in 1999, finally, an UN-sponsored (and supported) self-determination for Timor-Leste's population has taken place. In this year the decision was made: the restauration of independence was dated in 2002 and Timor-Leste became the first sovereign state of the 21st century (Leach, 2016).

Considering one of the country's recent projections, after this entire historical path the Portuguese colonization was considered rather less problematic than the Indonesian invasion (Leach, 2016). Taking this projection into account, it may not be of a great surprise that the perceiving of each force have been differently by Timor-Leste's society. To clarify this, it is of relevance to outline that during colonial times, the Portuguese administration (in cooperation with the catholic church) undertook its own mechanisms to enable a faster suppression of the Timorese society; with implementing and accepting traditional belief systems, for instance, into the daily lifes. Of course, such strategies have

to be understood through the benefit it gave to the new rulers, because the trust of society was gained faster. This means that throughout the process of participating on the sacred value system of local communities, the new administration gained power over the region without much of a resistance by the locals; just to name one relevant example (McWilliam, 2011: 5). Saying so, the expected changes through the Portuguese colonization maintained limited⁸. Contrarily, as a strategy by the new rulers, it strengthened the Timorese society in its core values and beliefs. This serves to understand the population of Timor-Leste within its economic, social and cultural systems which remained more or less intact (McWilliam, 2011).

The colonial Portuguese strategies of (ab)using the cultural dimensions of Timorese society differed to the approach of the Indonesian invasion. The Indonesian occupation leaders ignored and denounced the existence of local belief systems. This enforced a movement of resistance against the attempt to restructure the Timorese cultural value system. Therefore, the Indonesian presence was widely perceived without any proper legitimacy (Leach, 2016). Not just showing resilience against the Indonesian presence, they used the power of their local belief systems to fight for their freedom. As McWilliam states (2011), TLs society has shown remarkable resilience to reconstitute communities despite the depredation and suffering through the Indonesian occupation. During the fight for independence 1999, numerous local sacred spaces were attacked and destroyed by Indonesian military groups with the desire to erase symbolic sources of the Timorese resistance against Indonesian values. The society of TL showed its resistance against the systematic resettlement programs of Indonesia and maintained to present itself as a symbol of cultural identity; which is of great difference to its former power relation with the Portuguese administration.

Taking this brief introduction of how TLs society handled each form of power abuse into account, there is the need of pinpointing the coping strategies of post-colonial and post-invasion times. When taking a closer look to international relations, literature reveals that in a regional manner, Indonesia and TL are – by now – fostering a very close relation, based on diplomacy and friendship (Leach, 2016). When it comes to a regional

⁸ In cultural terms as well as in social organization, considering the implementation of the society's values into the new administration – not least as a strategy by the Portuguese colonizers in order to enable a faster and more substantial take-over

context, TL officially receives much of a support by its former invader. When being in communication about this issue with Timorese people, Indonesia is perceived as the country's neighbor; its friend⁹.

Yet, when taking a closer look to its former colonizers – the Portuguese – they are in many cases perceived as (younger) brothers. This expression rose great curiosity for my dissertation paper; considering the regional, geographical and cultural distance between Portugal and TL on one hand; and the proximity in each aspect between the small country and Indonesia. Therefore, this aspect of terming the Portuguese specifically (Europeans in general, as will be seen through the data analysis) as brothers and contrary to that, Indonesians as neighbors only¹⁰, is one of the leading arguments that will be used to discuss the relevance of the ecumene in beyond border narratives. Hence, talking about this (inter)regional context, the previously mentioned regional players (ASEAN, CPLP, foreign aid, NGOs, etc.) need further explanation in order to grasp the ecumene at stake for the building of international regions:

Regarding the context of ASEAN, Timor-Leste is trying to become its 11th member state officially since 2011. Previous attempts for entering the grouping have been undertaken. Even though, the membership procedure is still being placed 'on hold' by the grouping; which is marked by great curiosity due to the weak information dissemination on this case by the grouping itself. The great discourse around it reveals a 'Narrative of Readiness' (Seixas, Mendes & Lobner, 2019) of Timor-Leste, due to the examination of the various facts around the admission procedure with still no positive reply by ASEAN in order to admit the small country into the grouping.

In course of the CRISEA research we have made several attempts to collect data on this issue, which reveals another clash beyond the ones on the fore. This clash is precisely tackling a conflict of interests when it comes to regional organizations. ASEAN, as a RO, seems to be concerned about Timor-Leste's strong ties to the CPLP. Timor-Leste, as being a former colony of Portugal, belongs to CPLP, enhancing its ties to the international placed community of all former Portuguese colonies. As shown throughout

⁹ Relevant terminology when considering the term 'brother' on the opposite, at it is used for the Portuguese, for instance. Further elaboration on that in a later section.

¹⁰ It is relevant to note that this has to always be seen in a situational context and may change, depending on the circumstances of communication.

the data (presented in further steps), CPLP is seen in a rather different context than ASEAN, for instance. Even though Timor-Leste is showing strong commitment for becoming the groupings 11th member state, its relation to CPLP stands in a completely different position. CPLP is in the majority of data discussed as part of the family, as the ‘brothers’; whereas ASEAN on the opposite is considered as neighbor and/or friend (as referred above in the context of Indonesia). CPLP, as having a strong relation to Europe through its common denominator Portugal, brings new aspects within the narratives of our informant to the fore.

Furthermore, when considering TL and the presence of foreign aid and NGOs, the UN, the use of soft power by Australia, etc. play a relevant role for understanding the relevance of ecumene projections as discussed within this thesis. We can no longer speak of regionally bound relations, as they always seem to cross one or another expected limitation (may it be the nation-state, language, culture, etc). It is obvious that several mechanisms are at stake, which, again, leads to the assumption of the construction of a new realm – international regions in the building from below, as coping strategy for a togetherness of variables of foreign influences. This establishes a link between what has been outlined in the previous sections: the role of and interacting micro- and macro-approach on beyond border relations.

When following this previously outlined brief introduction to Timor-Leste’s relations in a (post)colonial context, firstly it will be focused on the micro-perspectives (narratives of perceptions and imaginations) towards the world at large and therefore, the eventual building of international regions. When looking closer at this, there are several terms used in TL which establish beyond border relations. One of the most relevant ones in this arena appears to be the term ‘brother’, referring to the data collected for this analysis. As will be seen in the following sections through narratives of the country towards the world at large, the use of this precise term in order to describe a certain interrelatedness may not always be a conscious process; yet, it seems to be ever present – and always ‘depends’¹¹ on the context. Mostly it is used in the context of Malai, what means in Tetun-language ‘foreigner’. Malai’s, therefore, are in the majority of situations

¹¹ As experts on the case of TL reveal, ‘it depends’ is a phrase which is ever-present in conversation with Timorese people. May it be on the perception of reality, on political circumstances or socio-cultural dimensions. The answer seems to always be situational, relying on the specific case (as well as space and time) being discussed (retrieved from informal interviews).

and contexts perceived as ‘brothers’. This has been contextualized by several anthropologists, mainly discussing it within the framework of colonization and coping strategies with former power relations; as we have pinpointed with its relation to Portugal and Indonesia (McWilliam & Traube, 2011).

When considering such narratives closer, we have to underline its relevance for the construction of realities. As outlined above, it is not necessarily always a conscious process. Even though it creates certain situations between the differentiation of ‘us’ and the ‘others’, as it is a very influential and relevant category in anthropological thinking.

Before moving further, we may look closer at the relevance of using narratives for understanding certain realities. Here, we may refer to Somers (1994) *Narrative Constitution of Identity*. Even though Somers focuses on identity constructions and how they have been analyzed through various disciplinary perspectives, her approach serves very well for understanding the importance of narratives for individuals and how they are used in order to deal with time, space and interrelations. She puts it into the perspective of a wider social realm, in which individuals use narratives for constructing meaning in an inter-relational context of people and communities beyond the traditional conception of nation-state borders (Somers, 1994).

Additionally, when looking at the literature of our discipline, we may not disregard Marshall Sahlins constructions of the *Stranger Kings*, which serve very well for deepening the understanding of the above-mentioned narratives which create a relation between the self and everyone apart of that. Sahlins’ literature is strongly relatable to the (post-)colonial context of TL and how the country’s people may create certain coping mechanisms in order to construct a reality of their own through beyond border narratives. Taking Sahlins (2008) conceptualization into account, his construct was built upon the question on how indigenous people did cope with foreign power relations and how they implemented it into their cosmological world view. From this perspective it seems that the locals have accepted foreign dominance as an act of conflict resolution in their own ideological terms. Sahlins, mainly focusing on pacific islands such as the Fiji, offers through his idea a very relevant example on how beyond border narratives on the ecumene are at stake: not only in TL, as this case study tries to depicture; but throughout several regions which are indeed not standing in a close relation to each other. When considering this relevant anthropological piece for discussion, we may firstly take a closer look into

beyond border narratives descending from TL, to thereafter contextualize it with ecumene projections and therefore, international relations through local perspectives.

The following two sections will contain a list of narratives from both the library and the field, collected from documents, media, fieldwork and experts. These narratives are used in order to understand ecumene projections from below and how these contribute to the construction of a new (international) realm on their own.

2.1.Narratives from the Library

As the anthropological library reveals, there are several narratives on the beyond border relations of TL. In the last 15 years, there has been a variety of ethnographies written on how the small country is relating itself to the rest of the world in terms of interrelatedness through family-terms. Saying so, in the following steps a collection of these narratives will take place, in order to continue with its analysis and importance for understanding the ecumene projections in the building of international regions of its own.

Regarding beyond border narratives (here, concretely in relation to the case study of TL), several ethnographic narratives emphasize traditional structures such as kinship, house societies and local imaginations to organize social life from bottom-up (e.g. James Fox, Andrew McWilliam, Lisa Palmer, Judith Bovensiepen, David Hicks, Michael Leach and Elisabeth Traube). Although, beyond border relations have been used to elaborate on nation- and state building, within literature there is almost no anthropological rationale which goes beyond these dimensions. Thus, it is useful to question how narratives of beyond border relations provide a ground for debating the building of international regions and how this discussion should make part of the interdisciplinary context of anthropology and IR. The relevance of these will be exemplified by local imaginations towards beyond border relations in terms of the ecumene. We may categorize the narratives found in the library into two sections: first, the cosmological dimension which establishes a people-to-people relation beyond borders (in terms of a *Gemeinschaft*; or emotional proximity); secondly, the cosmological dimension which establishes a states-relation beyond borders (in terms of a *Gesellschaft*; or, institutional identification processes). Both narratives are based on ancient/traditional perceptions of reality which strongly contribute to the position of TL in the context of the world at large, resulting in an eventual global *Gemeinschaft* (Robertson, 1995).

This distinction of ethnographic material is of relevance for the understanding of anthropological narratives in IR, as has been discussed earlier in this thesis. Even though it cannot be disregarded that both dimensions are having a great impact on the other one; for which reason a clear distinction cannot always be made. They should be understood as part of the same cosmology, used for different forms of reality constructions within the global realm. Hence, as mentioned above, the first outline will cover the people-to-people relations which go beyond borders and are constructed through local cosmologies. Saying so, the focus will be set on ancient narratives which pinpoint the global interconnectedness in kin-terms, through the ‘brothers from abroad’. Furthermore, identity constructions through myths of origin do play a relevant role, considering its importance for the perception of the world at large.

One very influential work about local systems and cosmologies in TL is the book ‘Land and Life in TL’ (ed. McWilliam & Traube, 2011), which contains a broad variety of ethnographic essays all around narratives and imaginations from below. Identity constructions, traditional customary systems, livelihood and the articulation of local ontologies come to stake. When considering beyond border relations closer, the anthropologist Elisabeth Traube did several researches on local narratives about myths of origin, which highly refer to the interconnectedness with the Malai world (western world). Only to mention one of her most influential works, in her ethnography *Planting the Flag* (2011) she provides an advanced analysis of the imaginations from below about ancestral lineages, relations and global associations – data she collected in the 70’s. She demonstrates several myths of origin, which are all framing a link to the western world through Timorese conceptions. Traube refers to the interconnection between inside and outside which can be translated into a relation between tradition and modernity. In this case, she presents the Timorese perception of the ‘returning outsiders’ whilst using the term Malai (white people) in their narratives. Therefore, white foreigners are understood as relatives (kin), descending from the same family/brothers (Traube 2011: 120).

In order to understand such imaginations on beyond border relations, international connections of TL with the rest of the world have to be considered and discussed through its meanings:

In another ethnography Traube describes a specific myth of origin, which appears to be relevant for this precise discussion: certain Timorese communities believe that a specific

mountain (Mount Ramelau) within the territory of the Mambai was the first dry land, originally surrounded by water and sea. The mountain itself is understood as the cosmos, whereof every entity (in a global context) descends. The diversity of inhabitants of the planet is categorized into three types: *i)* non-humans *ii)* elder siblings *iii)* younger siblings. Human ancestors are internally differentiated. Hence, *Au Sa* is seen as the first born within the Timorese family who went with nail and hammer to wander off to the West (the world of the white people). *Ki Sa*, on the other hand, is the founding ancestor with mystical powers who uses his luck and fortune to cross the seas and confront his younger Malai brother (Loer Sa). *Loer Sa* is the last born, the one who descended from the Malai and disappeared across the northern sea. He hands *Ki Sa* (his younger brother) the sovereign power in form of swords, drums and flags, where after *Ki Sa* heads back to Timor. In terms of this myth, ever since that event, TL is globally interconnected through the brothers – through kin (Traube, 2011).

Taking another example into account, James Fox is of great relevance. When following the usage of the term ‘brother’ in the Timorese context, he provides fundamental material to uncover this distinction between the inside and the outside realm. The anthropologist has done several researches on the understanding of the myths around the elder and the younger brothers, which are, similar to Traube’s findings, uncovering the perception of a kin-relation to Europe (or, at least said, the West). Leaning on Marshall Sahlins conceptualization of the stranger king, Fox also refers to how the ‘outsider’ is incorporated into the ‘inside’ (TL) through ancient narratives (and myths of origin). In his article ‘Installing the Outsider Inside’ (Fox, 2011) he samples various narratives of the Austronesian-speaking region which precisely deal with the coping mechanisms of foreign influences. He pinpoints the ‘indigenous presence and the coming of an outsider or an outside group, [...] who alters the structure of the society’ (Fox, 2011: 202). He states several patterns in the diverse origin narratives which cope with foreign influences. Firstly, as identifying the ‘outsider’ as an earlier ancestor, who left for a certain period of time and came back under specific circumstances (similar to Traube’s findings); second, the relative – the brother, who has been sent to exile and returns afterwards; third, the migrating ancestors who come back at a later time as the returning outsider; fourth, through marriage terms (the outsider who comes, marries a local woman, disappears and returns at a later point); fifth, the outsider who got installed inside by a local ancestral group and sixth, the merging of the marrying outsider and the stranger-outsider (as is the

case in the fieldwork of Seixas and Engelhoven, 2006). In this framework it is perceived that the outsider comes and represents the inside (Fox, 2011: 202).

Looking closer at these narratives, the point is that international relations is an ever-present topic, embedded in local narratives which construct beyond border processes. Installing the outsider inside is an evidence for coping with the worldly interconnectedness through people's cosmologies. Even though, this local construction is a relevant notion for understanding the bond between states through the local gaze; which is clearly missing in the discussion of international relations – yet, a very relevant reality which cannot be overlooked anymore. Fox describes this as 'a dialectic relationship of political authority and spiritual power to the categories of inside and outside' (Fox, 2011: 216). Hence, he points out that the inside has to be inevitably understood through the outside – and vice versa (Fox, 2011: 216).

Another ethnography, written by Paulo C. Seixas, contains a precise Timorese imagination on the creation of the world which is seen as having its roots in TL as the core of everything. In this perception, the country is understood as a *big moon* which separated into several pieces that floated away over time. This narrative enables an understanding of globalization as a separated, yet interconnected world, which Seixas (2008) proofs through a fieldwork example. In course of an anthropological project, he has been a witness of a 'ritual of institution' through which a Dutch academic, Aone van Engelhoven, became a Timorese relative. Van Engelhoven's ancestral lines go back to Leti, an island nearby the east part of TL. Throughout researches on his genealogy, Van Engelhoven discovered that his forefathers have common descend lines both in Leti and in the eastern tip of TL (Tutuala). Through this connection, he got accepted as kin by a certain Clan in Tutuala. Following the researches which manifested his roots within this ancestral line, his European (Dutch) family had to participate in the ritual. Seixas, as being the co-researcher of Van Engelhoven, has been approved as one of his family member due to his European descend – what gave him the permission to participate within the ritual; understood/imagined by the Clan as part of Van Engelhoven's family through the 'European lineage':

“[...] I don't know how much you already know about the clans in the district, but this is an excellent opportunity for us both. I have been working around in Lospalos and made you my relative through my wife

(she's also European; that's good enough for them)." (Van Engelhoven, 2006 in Seixas, 2008)

Culture as an ecumene projection, therefore, is rather a network of contacts with eventual effects upon the world at large; which may be represented through several features – not least to mention narratives and texts. As Pina-Cabral puts it:

"Thus, the ecumene is triggered off, as it were, by the reified products of its former occurrences, even when one is alone. When this happens, the dispositions of identification within the single person involved are deepened and reinforced, predisposing this person to greater ulterior recognition." (Pina-Cabral, 2010: 15)

Another relevant ethnographic example is also tackling narratives of origin, collected by the anthropologist Judith Bovensiepen who has undertaken several researches in Timor-Leste; considering ancient narratives on origin, kin and interrelatedness as a inevitable field of study. She precisely tackles the world of the ancestors and how this is embedded within the local perceptions towards the world. Similar as to the origin myths outlined by Fox and Traube, Bovensiepen tackles in her book 'Land of Gold' various narratives of Timor-Leste which are representing the same idea of interconnectedness in terms of the global realm. Again, the idiom of the brothers plays a core role. Only to mention one of her examples, she also tackles that the brothers have been divided by their ancestors, under differing conditions. One descended off, the other one stayed. The brother who left the country, returned in later times in order to bring back power and rule to its people.

If we look at another ethnographic case, this specific interpretation tackles the problematic of identity constructions and cultural diversity in Timor-Leste. In the Fataluku Clan it is imagined that the younger brother (Sorot Malai: the foreigner of the book) travelled overseas, which was understood as the journey of knowledge. He travelled abroad with a pen and a book to return later on with the wisdom of the world. Significant here is the 'knowledge of the Other', brought to Timor (Engelhoven & Seixas, 2010). Hence, the pencil and the book may be understood as metaphor for performing

power and rule over a society, which can be used for both realms (people contexts and states relations).

Speaking about the IR between political entities, there are specific examples to be found in library on Timor-Leste, which may deepen the consciousness on beyond border relations through the political domain in form of states relations for understanding the construction of a new realm from below - international regions.

In terms of states relations in anthropological narratives on Timor-Leste there are different approaches. Firstly, there is the tradition approach which tackles the ancient construction on the relation between Timor-Leste and the rest of the world (as has been previously outlined); and secondly, there is the modern approach which pinpoints international institutions which were influencing the country's reconstruction in the times of post-independence (Hohe, 2002; Silva & Simão, 2012; Seixas, 2016; etc.).

The first approach is to depict one specific narrative which focuses on the colonial era but may be seen – through this perspective – on the crossroad between tradition and modernity. The anthropologist Tanja Hohe has presented an ethnographic analysis (2002) which tackles the reciprocity between the modern dimension and the traditional dimension; between the inside-perspectives towards outside-relations. Precisely, Hohe has undertaken a research on how Timor-Leste's society is dealing with former (as well as current) power relations from outside the country. She set her focus on the post-independence period on when the UNAMET has been present in the country in order to establish a democratic structure and to provide assistance for stabilizing the political system. This foreign presence has led to different perceptions by locals, in which they used myths of origin in order to justify these relations. Following Hohe's myth collection (2002), she provides several samples on how Timor-Leste's society is coping in its narratives with the former Portuguese presence, thereafter the Indonesian occupation and following, foreign aid missions. Saying so, there are, again, clear references on the Portuguese being perceived as 'the younger brother who came to solve the violence' (Hohe 2002: 1).

Taking this into account, the imaginations of the Portuguese being the younger brother (who has been gifted by a pen and a book by the first ancestor, representing secular and executive power) served to construct political legitimacy, which can be understood as a coping strategy with this former power relation. The Indonesian presence,

on the opposite, is described (in several beyond border narratives) as the presence of the common; therefore, the elder brother (gifted with a machete and a crowbar in order to take care of the land) (Hohe, 2002: 5).

This links to the perception that the Indonesian occupation is also as a power relation from the outside – yet, not legitimized in terms of the Portuguese colonization. The Portuguese ‘younger brother’ is seen, as pinpointed above, as the sibling who was given the pen and the book and went to the West thereafter. Considering the term ‘West’ closer in this context, Hohe describes that even the post-independence period with the UN-presence has been justified through the younger brothers who came back to bring the peace. The relation between elder brothers (as seems to be here the case between Timor-Leste and Indonesia), is understood as a violent one; as tackled earlier in this thesis when considering the brutal invasion by Indonesia from 1975-1998. In certain Timorese indigenous classification systems (such as the Kemaq community), it is stated that this form of violence is a result of the elder brothers not coming along with each other (Hohe 2002: 9).

“The Portuguese once invaded the country as yB [younger brothers] to pacify when eB [elder brothers] were fighting against eB. Now that the ‘Javanese’ are classified as eB, ‘Javanese’ and Timorese are involved in a violent relationship as eBs. UNAMET arrives, representing the contrasting value category ‘yB’, to pacify its elder brothers. Additionally UNAMET is assembled out of many different nations. This time not only Portugal arrives as yB, but agents of all nations. ‘They all came’.” (Hohe, 2002: 9)

It is important to consider this categorization closer, due to the fact that there is a relation-construction with all the outside – the world at large. Staying at the argumentation line of the Kemaq community as an example, we may look at the following narrative: UNAMET, as Hohe outlines, is classified in the same terms as the former Portuguese power relation: ‘Well, it is not only the Portuguese, but all Westerners. They can all come to pacify everything, like UNAMET.’ (Hohe, 2002: 10)

This reference underlines the perception that UNAMET, as much as everyone who is perceived as Westerner (Malai, ‘white’, or European) may be the younger brother who

comes back from abroad in order to contribute in one way or the other to the country's well-being.

Another evidence in literature of how states relations are constructed between the local and the global is the presence of foreign institutions such as NGO's in a so-called peripheral country, and in the case of Timor-Leste precisely the UN aid missions in the post-independence period. The anthropologists Kelly Silva and Daniel Simão (2012) provide fundamental researches on precisely this interrelation and how it is established through local narratives and imaginations, based on emotional proximity and feelings. In one specific case study they focus on the role of such international institutions for the identification processes by Timor-Leste's society. This approach is a very relevant example on how the local and the global are being negotiated for constructing a social reality, considering both dimensions as important for each other. They tackle the role of global players and agents (INGO's, peace building missions, etc.) for the state formation of Timor-Leste (which serves as a case study) in post-colonial (here specifically post-independence) times. Once more, local perceptions are placed on the foreground when it comes to the construction of a (new) global realm of their own. This research is strongly placed between the urban and the rural; and how these two dimensions have been embedded in the process of state building in this new era.

Briefly summarizing the previous outlined narratives, they evolved firstly from TL local perspectives on kin-relations through the terminology of 'brothers from abroad' and therefore, coping with the 'inside' and the 'outside' in family terms/emotional proximity; secondly, from recent structures of nation-state building and participating foreign development aid institutions. This should be approached through an interrelation between IR and anthropology; with the ecumene acting as a bridge between both beyond border relations.

As the following graphic represents, the findings from the library reveal that the world may be seen as a gigantic family. This dimension stretches from the inside (Timor-Leste) outwards to the world, maintaining the narrative of the 'brothers from abroad'; the foreigners who 'come back home'. There is a clear link made between the inside and the outside world, which is of great relevance in the discussion of the ecumene projections and how these construct international regions.

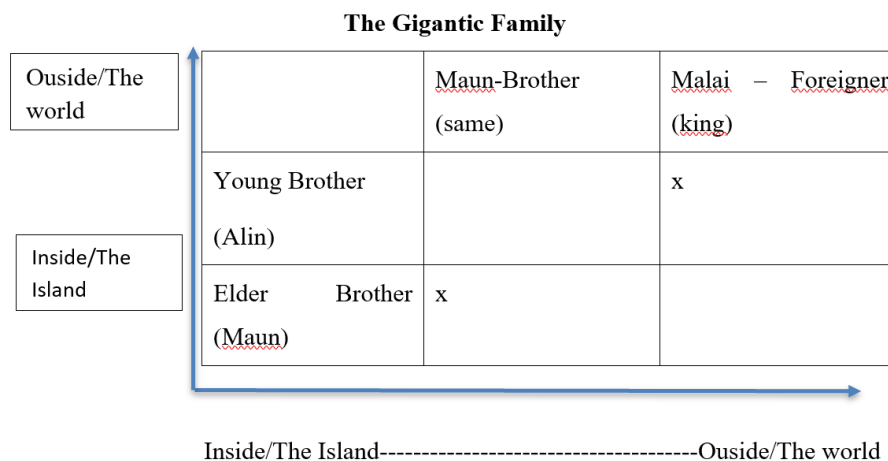


Figure 4

In order to continue with examples evidencing this proposal, the following section will provide narratives from the field which uncover the ecumene projections at stake, pinpointing the building of international regions.

2.2. Narratives from the Field

Throughout another research (CRISEA), empirical data was collected in the anthropological field, which contributes to the togetherness of narratives on this issue with the purpose of understanding if there is a general perception of an ecumene in order to understand the world at large – and therefore, the building of international regions. In this context, the interview subjects have referred to Timor-Leste as being part of a greater (internationally seen) family, which is very coherent with the data gathered in the anthropological library – with the notion of the brothers from abroad.

This data deeply contributed to the idea of ecumene projections in Timor-Leste, for which reason it is used in form of a post-factum research. As mentioned earlier within the methodological approach, this data had another purpose; yet revealed inevitable notions for the togetherness of information which is relevant for the discussion of the issue of this dissertation. This data has been collected by our research team in the context of Timor-Leste and ASEAN – a project which I am a grant holder of. Following, examples will be given on these specific narratives.

I. CRISEA Interviews: Timor-Leste and ASEAN

When following the interviews we have conducted within the framework of CRISEA, there is another evidence for the relevance of the ecumene. Having questioned our

interviewee on the relation of Timor-Leste to ASEAN and its importance for the nation as a whole, the following argument may be used for further discussion:

“For the nation's cooperation, for their negotiating partnership for... many nations like the CPLP, these are like older brothers and younger brothers. CPLP, it comes from there. Right now, they continue to maintain the relationship as older brothers and younger brothers, to establish history and establish development as a partnership. With Australia and Indonesia... it is more a trilateral relation between neighboring nations, to further establish the relationship at sea and on land, to cooperate through material things, like the humanitarian aid that exists.” (Interview RP, October 2018)

In this interview extract, CPLP is referred to be in a elder brother-younger brother relation with Timor-Leste. Considering the notion of the trilateral relation with ‘neighbor’-countries such as Indonesia or Australia, it comes to the fore that the countries actual closest nations (in a sense of geographical proximity) are not related through family terms. This is specifically relevant when considering the case of Indonesia. Indonesia, as has been outlined above, is in none of the cases seen as a relative, in terms of kin. Rather, through a diplomatic approach, the country is announced as a friendly neighbor¹².

Considering the social distance created through the violent environment in times of the Indonesian invasion, this coping mechanism may not be of great surprise. Nevertheless, when taking literature into account, this also matches very well with the historical background of far more behind. Relying on the myths of origin, which have been presented in the previous sections on the terminology of the elder and the younger brother; this distinction between ‘neighbors’ and ‘brothers’ may well serve as a coping strategy with foreign power relations – arrivals from overseas, and the justification of ongoing interrelations with populations from far away. This narration takes places on

¹² Nevertheless, this has to be always considered in situational terms. As mentioned in an earlier section, ‘it always depends’ on what context is at stake: in the example of Hohe, it is referred to the Indonesians as the same relative – the elder brother; whereof the Indonesian occupation has not been considered in terms of the previous Portuguese presence. Elder brothers do – when following this example – not have a good relation to each other, as would be the opposite case with ‘the younger brother who comes to solve the violence’ (Hohe, 2002: 1)

several levels. May it be – as seems to be the case here – a rather unconscious representation of international relations in the context of (international) regional organizations; or, the conscient strategic construction of links between certain countries through forms of communication between state leaders (and therefore, eventually, mechanisms of soft power) – as may be the case with the next example.

Another interview which has been conducted within the framework of CRISEA reveals a similar understanding of Timor-Leste and its relation to the world at large. The interviewee is precisely talking about the elder-brother younger-brother context between TL and other CPLP countries – similar as has been taken place in the previous interview. The informant distinguishes between ASEAN and CPLP in terms of identity and belonging, as the following interview extract represents:

“Timor is unique because... In terms of regional organizations, Timor is also part of CPLP, so... they [ASEAN] are a little bit careful because... I am not absolutely sure, but I suspect that Timor's independence was not a 100% supported by ASEAN. Timor has many connections in Europe, especially Portugal and Mozambique, Angola, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, the CPLP *maun-alin* [the older and younger brothers] gave the strongest support. [...] ASEAN is sometimes careful about this. If we compare with Laos or the others... Geographically, Timor is similar to the others, but given the exceptional case of Timor's independence, it does not resemble other countries.” (Interview HC, October 2018)

As the informant reveals, Timor-Leste's identity is perceived as rather outside the Asian region. The individual states that geographically, there are of course similarities – but the content of the interview uncovers one more evidence for the construction of an international region in terms of beyond border relations through the ecumene.

Not just tackling the dimension of identity constructions and distinctions between ‘kin’ and ‘neighborhood’ in rather social terms, the political dimension is clearly relevant as well. The interviewee tackles the beyond border relations through regional

organizations – using narratives from below. Here, the intermingling between the macro- and the micro comes to the fore. Another reference strengthening this argument is the following extract:

“This [democracy and human rights¹³] can also be a barrier¹⁴... There are some perspectives... Firstly, modern perspectives which relate to this as a form of positive learning; then there is the *status quo* perspective, which says that this way of learning may be a negative influence [to the region]... This is why I said that when Timor-Leste was independent, there were a lot of commitments, contributions from various countries, especially from the *maun-alin* [elder brother-younger brother] countries. CPLP, and also from some European countries - Portugal. There are several reasons, so, they [ASEAN] are careful, they are beware of this.” (Interview MM, September 2018)

This reveals eventual concerns by ASEAN member states that Timor-Leste may not be Asian enough – if it is in political terms, in historical or in socio-cultural ones. It seems that TL is positioned rather outside the SEA region – even if geographically being clearly located within. Nevertheless, it comes to the fore that geography is not necessarily an indicator when emotional proximity is at stake; and therefore, not the most relevant dimension of constructing interrelatedness.

When talking about this emotional proximity within an international context between populations, in many cases, unknown to each other; we may refer to another interview extract, collected in the course of CRISEA – also tackling the relation between Timor-Leste and ASEAN.

One Civil Society informant perceives the situation as following:

¹³ Opposing to autocratic and military regimes which are prevailing in the SEA region, TL is holding a unique position with its high human rights records and democratic political system, which got established in cooperation with UN peacebuilding missions after the reconciliation of freedom in 2002.

¹⁴ For becoming the 11th member state of ASEAN

“It is one thing for Timor to become a member of regional organizations such as ASEAN, the other thing is, for CPLP. With CPLP, historically speaking, Timor-Leste has a similar context of interests, because of shared history. Countries which were colonies of Portugal share an emotional historical relationship. Relating to other respects we may continue to discuss, but I think that CPLP is also linked to ASEAN. ASEAN countries are also proud when a country in their organization is a member of an organization in a different region. Timor-Leste can become an instrument for ASEAN civil society and CPLP civil society in order to work together, share knowledge and regional issues. This means that they cannot be closed, they must be open. Now, ASEANs civil society must also know that there would be the opportunity to access the space of CPLP through Timor-Leste, in order to access the civil society space in Europe.”

[Interview AC, October 2018]

This interview extract precisely pinpoints the international realm and how such a representation contributes to the relevance of taking ecumene projections within IR approaches into account. The informant understands a relation between regions – international regions through the interaction between the micro- and the macro. In this interview, it is stated that the civil society of both organizations should be able to work together, to contribute from each one. It is understood that this may be a benefit Timor-Leste could bring to ASEAN; to act as a sort of middleman/middle-country between both regions. This, obviously, has to be seen in an international, global context: where the relevance of the ecumene comes to the fore. The interviewee first and above all relates more to CPLP due to historical reasons and tackles the emotional bound he perceives as prevailing within this (international) region – referring to the connection he makes to Europe through Portugal. He mentions that Timor-Leste could act as a facilitator between Asia (or better said, ASEAN), Europe (Portugal) and CPLP. This evidences what we

propose to be international regions under construction through beyond border imaginations.

Furthermore, another interview which is perceived as relevant for discussion has been undertaken in September 2018 with a Timorese state leader. The interview was focusing on the position of Timor-Leste in the regional context of ASEAN, whereof it was questioned on how the interviewee perceived the membership procedure and its importance for the country as well as for the organization as a whole. Following the content of the interviewee, it was referred to ASEAN as a family, which Timor-Leste (metaphorically speaking) will marry to, when entering the grouping. Regarding the context as a whole, it was questioned by us if, in case of entering [marrying¹⁵] the grouping, the other regional interconnections of TL could be problematic for this relation (CPLP, Asia Pacific, Commonwealth, etc.). The interviewees response was as following:

“Well if we are in an organization of course we are following the rules of engagement with that organization. But that doesn’t mean that as a sovereign country we cannot have friends with another person, like you married your husband and that doesn’t mean that you abandon all your friends. You need to have friends still!” (Interview VT, September 2018).

This interview segment can be interpreted in the following way: when referring to intimate relations such as marriage and friendship in the context of international regions, a notion of family and its meanings on a macro-level come to the forefront. Referring to macro-structures through such personalized forms of communication may indicate beyond border relations in terms of kin, emerging from social reality constructions on the ecumene for justifying states relations.

Another relevant impact on the discussion of the international regions in the building through the ecumene at stake is retrievable through the interview with another Timorese state actor. This interviewee refers to the interaction between regional organizations (similar as the other informants) as a great opportunity for ASEAN, whereof Timor-Leste could be a facilitator/middleman for. The interviewee precisely speaks about CPLP and how the organization cannot be understood as regional anymore

¹⁵ Precise wording of the interviewee

– at least, it has to be spoken of a trans-regional domain. This is a very relevant information concerning the building of international regions through intersubjective reality constructions.

Fieldworker: “It was good to have approached this other area now, because at the article and academic level, it is often invoked as one of the obstacles to Timor's membership, the fact that Timor is playing, let's say, in several areas. if at the level of CPLP, or concerning the Pacific Islands Forum... To what extent do you consider this to be seen as an obstacle?”

Interviewee: “From our point of view, I think it's not a hindrance. It's even a capitalization opportunity. For example, in relation to the Pacific Islands Forum, it is specific that there are certain restrictions which imply not integrating two regional organizations at the same time. Now, in relation to CPLP, it is no longer a regional organization, it is already trans-regional, so there actually cannot be such problems of membership.” (Interview HC, October 2018)

This interview extract is one more example for how relations between states are being established within an international context through the ecumene; descending from micro-structures in a continuous reciprocal process with macro-structures. People-to-people, people-to-states, states-to-states. This perspective enables the bridge between the above discussed bi-dimensional approach: anthropological perspectives and international relations for understanding the world at large; a new global realm in the making.

The world as Brothers & Neighbors

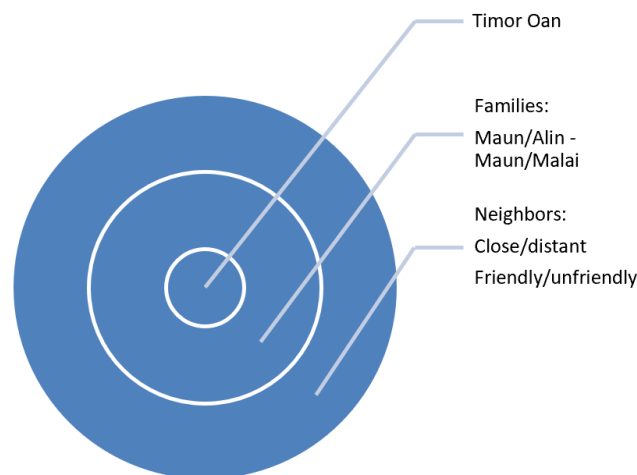


Figure 5

This graphic is an attempt to depict the findings of the field: the interviews which have been used for this dissertation reveal that the world may be seen in two (complementary) ways. Taking the identity's core into account (Timor Oan), there are two projections visible: firstly, the one of familiar proximity (households, families, brothers in an either spatial close or distant matter – Maun/Alin, or Maun/Malai); secondly, the as well either spatial close or distant neighbors, in a friendly or unfriendly matter. This eventually reveals a form of multiple belonging to several families, spread out all over the world.

Lastly, besides evidences from anthropological research; both literature and the field, there are further hints to our problematic within the domain of political communications within media. Saying so, we may look closer towards one specific interaction as a concluding example, which took place in 2008 between a Timorese and a Brazilian state actor, what represents international regions in the making through traditional kin-narratives¹⁶. Saying so, when referring to an interaction between the former Brazilian president Lula da Silva and the former Timorese president José Ramos-Horta, they pointed out to each other as elder and younger brother, who are 'always

¹⁶ This process may be located between the crossroad of the conscious and the unconscious. It is not always clear if the actors themselves are using certain metaphors in a strategic manner, of it is the projection of meaning on a much more complex and abstract dimension.

helping each other out' (Portal Vermelho, 2008). Regarding the fact that both countries belong to the grouping CPLP, this reference may be seen as metaphor for a strategic linkage to family structures and following this, international relations through the political gaze. Hence, we may also understand it as an articulation/interconnection between micro- and macrostructures; beyond border narratives from both people-to-people relations and states-to-states relations; Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft constructions. Here, the bridge for such an interrelation is – once again – the ecumene at stake, which enables the understanding of a fusion of populations beyond borders to cope with new times and new spaces.

Following, these interrelations as how they are created by people towards the world at large will be put into perspective when considering ecumene projections as complementary to IR approaches of understanding beyond border relations through various meaning systems.

3. The Ecumene as a complementary view to international states relations

Following what has been reached throughout this dissertation, the main contribution is firstly, three ideal types reached from the library; secondly, the elaboration of the Timorese world ideal type through a dialogue between neighbors and brothers.

In the last sections the attempt was to highlight perspectives on the world at large in terms of beyond border relations, both from a theoretical perspective and from people's perspectives. These have been discussed through the case study of Timor-Leste with the aim to understand the circulation of constructions on global interrelatedness through a states-perspective as much as through a people-perspective; therefore, perceptions on beyond border relations. One of the main points of discussion was that in international relations, people's perspectives have to be deeply considered; as they have been disregarded ever since. The focus is mainly set on interrelations between states through institutions and power; whereof there is a great lack on including people/individuals (and therefore, ecumene projections) themselves. Considering that there are international regions under construction, every day through everyone, these two intermingling mechanisms have to be explored more profoundly.

In IR discussions, bounds between people, regions and the world at large seem to be outcomes of the interaction between states (state created). Yet, they are imperfect – for which reason it appears to be of high relevance to set the focus on the dimension in between, on the intermingling of the local and the global. As has been discussed in a previous section on states relations and the role of interconnectedness in international relations theory construction, it is obvious that the discipline's focus has been on states and their interactions (in the discourse of the world at large). Although, not including people's perspectives, actions and approaches reveals a great gap for understanding the worldly interconnectedness in its whole. Considering the ecumene in beyond border narratives as a relevant dimension for IR discussions seems inevitable when taking future perspectives into account. Our world is moving every day faster in its interrelations and connections, under the umbrella of globalization mechanisms. There is, as many academics have tried to contextualize, no more such a thing as separated areas of our planet (Appadurai, 1996; Hannerz, 1996; Pina-Cabral, 2010; Keane, 2003; Nye, 2008; etc.). We are all connected in one or the other way. Now, it is a matter of bringing it into a discourse of acknowledging such interweaving processes in order to make sense of the reciprocity between the global and the local.

When taking the data of this research into account, states relations seem to always play a role in people's narratives; yet, as mentioned above, it has not been discussed as such by the IR discipline itself. Unconsciously (and we may not disregard that in some cases, even consciously), our informants create a relation between their own space and far-away realities. Such constructions come to the foreground when we consider the Timorese narratives which tackle the 'brothers from abroad', defining individuals within CPLP as brothers (or, more concretely, Portugal as its younger brother who came to save the country from violence [Hohe, 2002: 1]). As mentioned earlier, neighbors such as Indonesia are considered in different terms – 'it always depends'. They may be a neighbor only in one situation, in the other situation they may be perceived as elder brothers (what means, therefore, 'the same'). If we consider the spatial proximity between these two countries; we may see more relatedness in cultural, geographical, language and social terms. Nevertheless, this seems to not play a role for the individuals themselves, when relating to each other in broader context: in beyond border relations with the consideration of the world at large, geographical proximity often seems to be one of the least factors of

creating a link to others. Considering this as a relevant theme for people's realities, its importance for the studies of IR come to the fore.

Previously, this context has been discussed under the framework of Ecumene constructions through local narratives on reality perception, which is a theme clearly located in anthropology. Yet, when such interrelatedness is placed within a global context, IR have to move beyond their usual focus points: state relations exclusively on institutional (political and economic) levels. People's perceptions and reality constructions have to be deeply considered in the construction of a new realm – of international regions. Bearing in mind that Timorese people relate stronger to CPLP countries in identity terms, compared to how they relate to their Southeast Asian neighbors (ASEAN) - which is deeply embedded in their narratives -, it is clear that imaginations of origin and interrelatedness go beyond given norms and values; which strongly contribute to the complexity of the building of international regions.

Relating to IR and its perspectives on the relation between States, there is the growing perception within the discipline that the understanding of culture – in the form that it has been used by IR until the present day – must be overcome and re-structured in the mindset of its core. As Reus-Smit (2019) puts it, the old-fashioned view towards culture by IR sees its dimension as 'tightly integrated, neatly bounded and clearly differentiated' from others. In terms of social institutions, culture is – in IR – seen as a core element of their consistence. Considering the fact that, even though, culture is further ongoing seen through a rather discredited view of IR (Reus-Smit, 2019), we have to look closer on how this perspective influences the representation of global interrelations. In this context, IR do mainly focus on studying certain groups as cultural units, such as the idea of a bounded nation-state with national characters, identities and interests; whereof 'national culture is seen as a key source of interests' (Reus-Smit, 2019).

Yet, if looking closer at this perception of culture to be nation-bound, we may take a step forward in considering IRs main strands (Realism, Liberalism and Constructivism). Realism with its great materialist stance may be used as the first example for undermining 'culture' as something clearly separate of others and fixed to a certain territory, contributing to the mindset of a specific group – in this case, defining the character of a nation-state and its establishment of institutions. (neo)Liberalism, as the second strand in IR, has its focus clearly on the institutional aspect and how cultures are being influenced

by institutional characters. Following these approaches, behavior is considered to be affected by outside physical factors – contrary to the perspective of constructivism. Here, epistemic interpretations of the material world evolving out of human (inter)action are on the frontstage, regarding the manners in which the world is shaped (Adler 2017: 322). Saying so, constructivism focuses on shared meanings of the social order, which are understood as ‘cultural’. This perception comes closest to the argument of culture as a heterogenous and contradictory condition. Emphasis is set on the ontological reality of intersubjective knowledge. As a rather social theory, it offers a base for international politics and the building of international communities – as has been represented previously through the case of GCS, for instance. Through this approach, a bridge can be built between materialist and idealist philosophies within the field of social sciences (Adler, 2017: 323).

In constructivism perspectives, there are two manners of using the cultural dimension of interrelatedness: firstly, it is focused on international norms and how they emerge and shape identities, interests, behaviors; which breaks culture down to individual norm construction (with focusing, again, on the economic and political dimensions). This leads to the neglect of its complexities and variations (Reus-Smit, 2019). The second manner of using the cultural dimension is based on institutional foundations within the international order, through which it is seen as a collective mentality (See GCS in section 1.1.). The English School of IR frames that states themselves may form international societies. Following this, they come together through shared common interests and built upon equal rules, which are maintained by the constitution of institutions (INGOs; social movements; human rights defenders; global protests; etc.). Therefore, the interrelation of states is understood through the sharing of ‘basic interests in physical security, stable territorial rights and the keeping of agreements’ (Reus-Smit, 2019), which is, in this case, the basis of an international society.

These very pragmatic and static perceptions of culture as a detectable, fixed and static condition must be put under question within the constructions of IR. Taking into account that the modern world order is a product of a broad variety of encounters and not of a static unity; we have to question how such heterogenous actualities may have shaped the world-orders evolution. Here, the relevance of post-colonial practices must not be

overlooked when looking closer at practices of ‘governing global diversity’ in order to accommodate new arrangements of power and cultural differences (Reus-Smit, 2019).

We have pinpointed global connections through both perspectives: through micro-structures in terms of beyond border narratives, with the case study of Timor-Leste; and through macro-structures in terms of the relation between states and how these are established through greater narratives and mechanisms/tools, such as soft power, NGOs and a global civil society, IROs, etc.

The proposal of the relevance of the ecumene in beyond border relations lies in considering the cultural proponent of main importance in balancing micro- and the macro-constructions of a global interrelatedness, with the aim to establish a ground for new (future) perspectives. People (perspectives from below) cannot be dismantled anymore from greater structures and constitutions (states perspectives). If we want to understand the world order through its greater picture, the ecumene at stake has to be considered of inevitable relevance within this debate.

When taking social perspectives on global interrelatedness - which have been presented within this work - into account, one may understand that there seems to be the building of international regions at stake. If we pinpoint this avenue through social situations such as is the case with the framework of kinship perceptions (bearing in mind the case study of Timor-Leste and its coping strategies with foreign influences), or the narrative of ‘neighbors’ opposed to ‘brothers’ when moving back and forth on the ground of (international) regional organizations (as is the case with ASEAN or CPLP) for instance; such mechanisms come clearly to the front stage. Even though, more indirect mechanisms such as soft power and the construction of a global *Gemeinschaft* through such common means are evidencing that the ecumene is at stake when trying to understand international regions in the making. Pina-Cabral has framed this encounter of dimensions in his ‘Lusotopy as an Ecumene’ as an interrelation between language, cultural codes, political institutions and amity, which is on the roots of kinship networks and social personhood’ (Pina-Cabral, 2010: 1-2). He prefers the concept of amity for his discussion; even though he considers kinship as a relevant dimension.

In course of this dissertation, three ideal types of the ecumene with new common senses have been proposed: creolization, amity and global lineages. Hence, this new common senses may be considered as types of global *Gemeinschaft*/community which

are not necessarily distinct from macro-structures such as the political dimension with institutions (the idea of *Gesellschaft* with its bureaucratic bounds and different interests) (Tönnies, 1887). Intersubjectivity shows its influence on political institutions, as has been pinpointed in a previous section through the approach of constructivism in international relations (the world as a relation between states).

“By using it [the concept of amity], I mean to stress that what is at stake in these encounters is a process of interaction that is also a process of constant human co-construction, which is akin and associated with the processes of emotional constitution that characterize kinship and friendship.” (Pina-Cabral, 2010: 3)

This goes hand-in-hand with our proposal of the beyond border realm as a gigantic family, addressed through a kinship domain, considered as complementary to the perspective of states-relations. Hence, a bi-dimensional approach towards beyond-border relations, as we have presented throughout this work, evidences the interaction between the global and the local. The attempt is to understand the world as one; which is an arena of meaning-negotiation depending on time, space and realities.

Finally, nation-states may be understood as a mix of family extension and a bureaucratic process of power (nation vs. state), whereof beyond border relations (ecumene projections) – cross the idea of established cognitive borders. This ecumene application for overcoming arbitrarily constructed borders may be understood as a coping strategy with the past and the present, as well as a tool for constructing the future.

Conclusion

Throughout this work, the aim was to establish a path for discussing the intermingling of several meaning systems on a global scale, considering the importance of the interaction between anthropology and IR. It was questioned if international regions may be in the building, considering beyond border narratives in form of ecumene projections as an important theme. The attempt was to depict if local narratives on the world at large grasped by anthropology, and narratives of state relations may be understandable as an ideological arena for alternative meaning systems in IR. When

referring to the case of TL within the context of the building of international regions, this theme has been discussed through – amongst others - family networks, anchored in the local narratives which serve to understand the imagination on beyond border relations from below. As researches have shown, there are imaginations which contain the context of the global interconnectedness of every individual – TL as the origin of all people. Whoever arrives in TL is seen as Brother or Sister, ‘coming back home’ (Seixas, 2016). This has led to the assumption of the discursive character of nation-building (and beyond) through identification processes on the subnational and supranational level, defined by local narratives. Proposing this as a circulation of meanings between the local and the global, we may understand it as re-identification processes of individuals – from people to people, states to states – considering the dimension of the world at large.

Hence, in the case of Timor-Leste, we encouraged the thought that beyond border narratives may be seen as one of the foundations of trans/international connections. On a macro-level, global players such as CPLP, ASEAN, the EU, etc.; as well as INGOs and the UN and so forth may be considered as stakeholders for states relations. On a micro-level, individual imaginations of global links through family terms, defined through beyond border narratives and imaginations on origin, could be framing the relation between Timor-Leste’s society and foreigners (outsiders; when referring to the inside/outside relations).

The Ecumene as a balance

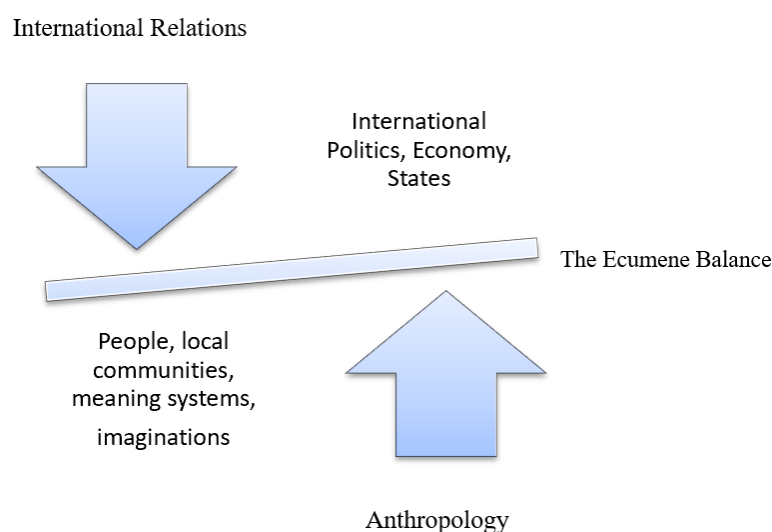


Figure 6

Nevertheless, we have to question the following: how does the case of Timor-Leste open up for further researches? How could it help to frame a model? As proposed through this dissertation, it may serve as a model from below in order to structure international states relations under the framework of multilateralism.

Furthermore, it is important to remain with the following idea for further approaches: within this thesis, one attempt was to tackle the quest of different meaning systems when it comes to the human perception and construction of the world – considering IR and anthropology as relevant discourse for approaching this avenue. Hence, this ontological problematic may not be understood as a division of two worlds (micro and macro; people and states); it is rather placed as a negotiation of meanings within one world – the intermingling of a continuous re-organization of social livelihood in a global context.

As we have represented through figure 4 and figure 5, we may refer once more to the findings of this dissertation: firstly, when looking at the data from the anthropological library, the world seems to be perceived as a large family through which the inside- and the outside realm are in a continuous and ongoing interconnection. The data from the field revealed that the world may be divided into two dimensions: families (emotional proximity, households, etc.) and a more distant one, such as is the case with neighbors (close or proximate, friendly or unfriendly).

Hence, may keep the following (rather philosophical) question in mind: what sort of interaction is at stake when we approach the world at large? Is there such an understanding of ‘one world’, may we divide ‘world’ into several dimensions, who are the actors that construct the framework of ‘the world’? I propose that it is a dialogue, which is taking place; an interaction at large. But what is the togetherness of reflections which are continuously moving further and are re-organizing realities? Where do meaning systems meet, how do they evolve, and can this dimension be grasped as ‘one’ only? Where do imaginations start, where do they end? And what influence may they have on the perception and construction of reality?

These questions remain open and have to be considered for further elaboration and research, considering their relevance when we try to understand the complexity of humanity’s interrelations.

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